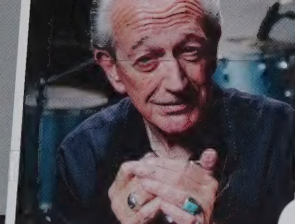


Wilf Carter

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Charlie Musselwhite

"Elvis validated us, made us seem like, 'We ain't so bad after all'."



Reviews

Shooglenifty

"Innovating. Elating. Stimulating."

penguin eggs



kaia kater

kaela rowan

the outside track

tim hus

alligator records

ten strings and a goat skin

maristina & quinn bachand

shley macisaac

ML

5

P46

no.71

2016

MUSIC

Issue No. 71 autumn 2016 \$5.99



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03

2016-2017 SEASON

STRANGE BREW

September 18

SHELDON CASAVANT

September 20

ROYAL WOOD

September 23 & 24

RADICAL REELS

September 29

MONKEYJUNK

September 30

MOHAMED FAHMY: MEDIA

IN THE AGE OF TERROR

October 1

Noisy Theatre

ANDREA HOUSE presents

HUGO, THE SCAREDY-CAT

CATERPILLAR

October 4

ANDREA HOUSE

October 4

FRED EAGLESMITH

TRAVELLING SHOW

October 6 & 7

TERRA LIGHTFOOT

with Opening Guest

CAYLEY THOMAS

October 15

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

October 30

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES:

THE SEQUEL

November 6

FORTUNATE ONES

November 4

QUARTANGO:

BODY AND SOUL

November 5

AOIFE O'DONOVAN

November 9

JAYME STONE'S

LOMAX PROJECT

November 12

DAVID MYLES:

IT'S CHRISTMAS

December 6

Mermaid Theatre of

Nova Scotia presents

GOODNIGHT MOON &

THE RUNAWAY BUNNY

December 11

THE McDADES

December 16 & 17

AWAY FROM HER

January 15

BARRY ALLEN &

THE NEW REBELS

January 21

Noisy Theatre

SINGING WITH SYLVIA

January 25

MARCO CLAVERIA PROJECT

January 27

NEW NORTH COLLECTIVE

January 28

MARGARET TRUDEAU:

CHANGING MY MIND

February 3

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

starring JIM WITTER

February 4

LISA BROKOP:

THE PATSY CLINE PROJECT

February 10

THE BILLS

February 11

Axis Theatre presents

HAMELIN: A NEW FABLE

February 12

MEASHA BRUEGGERGOSMAN:

THE SONGS OF FREEDOM

February 17

THE HARPOONIST &

THE AXE MURDERER

February 18

CANADA'S BALLET

JÖRGEN: SWAN LAKE

February 24

Noisy Theatre

Bach Tots presents

ONCE UPON A SEASON

March 15

ROSE COUSINS

March 17

NIYAZ feat. AZIM ALI

March 18

MEN WITH BROOMS

March 19

DELHI 2 DUBLIN

March 31

MAZ

April 1

FUBAR & FUBAR 2

April 2

THE SMALL GLORIES &

JOHN WORT HANNAM

April 20

THE JIVIN' BELLES

June 27

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Cover Story

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Back with his gnarliest music in a decade, the controversial Cape Breton fiddler finds his brazen muse amidst dead tracks and samples.

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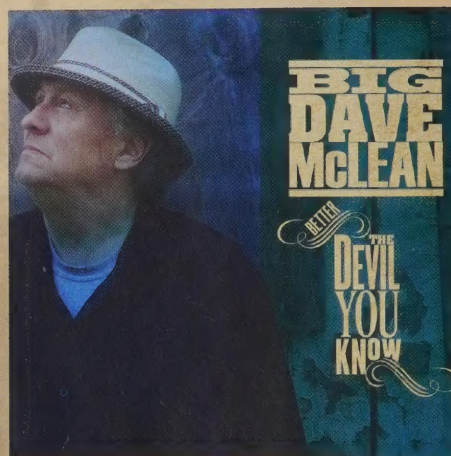
The young, gifted, and black Canadian banjo player reflects on some of the key issues that inspired her gripping new album.

Cover Photo: Steve Edge

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BLACK HEN MUSIC PROUDLY PRESENTS



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Juno-Award nominated album ***"Faded But Not Gone"***

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Juno-Award nominated Black Hen
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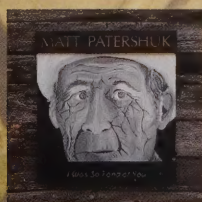
"This masterpiece will haunt listeners." -Blues Blast

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-Maple Blues Magazine

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More zesty Black Hen releases...



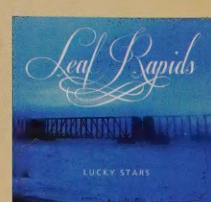
Matt Patershuk
I Was So Fond of You



Steve Dawson
Solid States & Loose Ends



Christa Couture
Long Time Leaving



Leaf Rapids
Lucky Stars

FACTOR Canada

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Ce projet est financé en partie par FACTOR, le gouvernement du Canada et les radiodiffuseurs privés du Canada.

www.blackhenmusic.com

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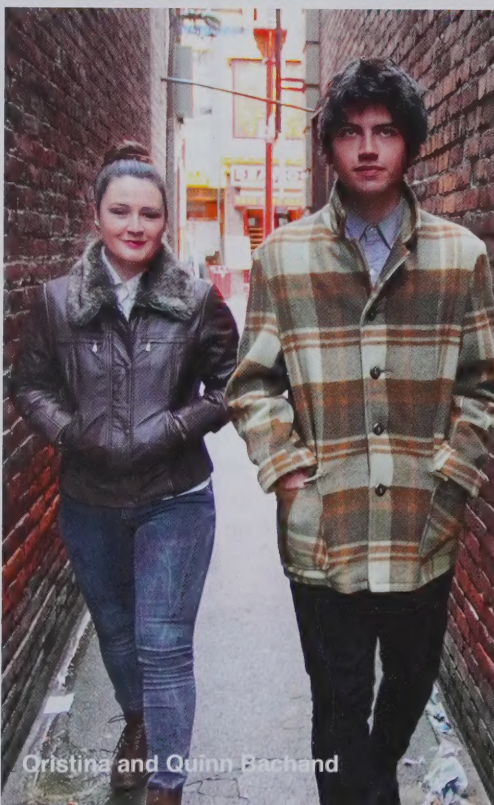
The Breath: *Carry Your Kin* "... a deep rich (dare I say mature?) album."

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Tony Montague calls for a broader, national acceptance of performers who don't fit into the Anglo-Celtic mould.



penguin eggs

The Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such diverse artists as Bob Dylan, Warren Zevon and Kate Rusby.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. In 2012, however, he finally made an emotional comeback, performing at several events throughout the summer only to be sidelined yet again through illness. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. It's available through Topic Records. This magazine strives to reiterate its spirit.

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Editorial

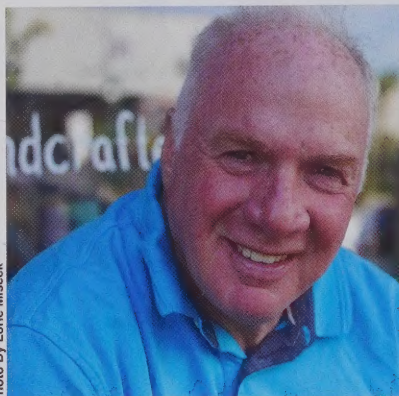


Photo By Lorie Miesek

As the summer folk festival season gradually winds down, it's time, methinks, for a few casual observations. I'm tired, sure. Too many consecutive weekends out and about seeking a spark of originality that separates the good from the glorious. And you'll read all about the latter in our Winter issue. But the times they are a changin'.

For starters, it's heartening to report that younger festival audiences now appear in the ascendancy. Their tastes, of course, demand attention. Catering to a youthful audience certainly bodes well for the future of all our festivals. But at any cost? The growing tendency to book out-and-out pop or rock bands to play folk festival main stages requires immediate scrutiny. To me that's simply unimaginative, lazy, base booking. Does the taste of older, loyal fans not deserve due consideration, too? Most certainly. But it seems to me their fealty amounts to diminishing returns.

In 1988, the topical English songwriter Leon Rosselson interviewed Gary Cristall—then the artistic director of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival—for the U.K. magazine *Folk Roots* (now *fRoots*). Here's the one quote that stuck with me over the years: "I decided to build a festival that was truly independent of the music industry. You cannot rely on so-called stars because once you do, the minute the stars don't come out

at night, you're finished." I scoffed at the time. I wanted to see artists of the calibre and status of Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison, the Violent Femmes, Billy Bragg... And I still do.

But what has changed is that Cristall's "so-called stars"—or headliners in today's argot—now dominate the publicity and financial resources of many of our folk festivals and undermine their cultural impact. How often do you now see a zydeco, Cajun, or Celtic band play a main-stage slot at the big Canadian folk festivals?

Don't get me wrong, headliners serve a purpose. Name recognition puts bums on seats and generates publicity through mainstream media. While the punters lay down their hard-earned cash to see the likes of Lord Huron, The Cat Empire, or Calexico, they can also discover lesser known but immensely talented artists, such as Kacy & Clayton, Twin Bandit, or Matthew Byrne on the intimate, blessed workshop stages. That's how it's supposed to work, at least. But it seems to me, the more money now spent on celebrities with dubious folk and roots credentials the less there often appears available to sufficiently stock the smaller stages with the quality of musicians and singers that have historically created the emotional magic at folk festivals.

The diminishing value of the Canadian dollar and a hardening economic climate certainly didn't help matters this summer. Various box offices around the country reported reduced revenue. Even the imposing Edmonton Folk Music Festival saw a shift from coveted weekend passes to single-day tickets. Fiscal adjustments will be made throughout the country to compensate for any financial shortcomings. And while artistic budgets ought to remain sacred, how they are spent warrants an urgent audit. These wonderful events deserve nothing less.

— By Roddy Campbell

The Record That Changed My Life



Jez Lowe

A gifted songwriter steeped in the traditions of North East England, Jez Lowe salutes Planxty's iconic, self-titled, 1973, debut LP.

In 1973 was the year I left school. It was also the year I went to my first folk club, of which, in the northeast of England at that time, there was a great many. There were nine separate clubs in the nearby town of Sunderland alone, inevitably in the backrooms of pubs, at a time when pubs were plentiful. I may have just left school but I learned more in those pubs in those 12 months than I had learned in the seven long and arduous years of secondary education from which I was newly liberated. I soaked up the whole beautiful thing, the ballads, the blues, the union songs, and was lucky enough to catch the sunset performances of people such as Lizzie Higgins, Seamus Ennis, and A.L. Lloyd, along with the dawning days of youngsters such as Nic Jones, Tony Rose, The Dransfields, and Vin Garbutt, all with new albums on the emerging specialist folk record labels such as Trailer, Tradition, and the long-established Topic Records.

But the life-changing musical experience for me that year didn't happen in a folk club but in a posh nightclub called The Top Hat in the County Durham town of Spennymoor, and the album that came with it was

not on a mere folk label but on Polydor Records, the same label that had brought us Cream, Eric Clapton, Rory Gallagher's Taste, and even, latterly, Jimi Hendrix.

Planxty, featuring Christy Moore, Donal Lunny, Liam O'Flynn, and Andy Irvine, had been around for a year or more by the time I saw them in that most unlikely of venues, where the entire region's folk fraternity, denim-clad and bushy-haired, sat uneasily in glittery surroundings that November night. Indeed, the band had played at Durham Folk Festival the previous summer. I'd missed them then, as I was hitchhiking around Britain for reasons unfathomable to me now. But when I'd returned, everyone could speak of nothing else but this amazing band, the charismatic singer, and the array of astounding instruments. Few of us had heard a bouzouki, or a bodhran, or a hurdy-gurdy, not to mention uilleann pipes, in those far-off days. Yet here they all were in one tightly arranged whole. And the whole magic potion was captured on record, enigmatically wrapped in a blacker-than-black cover with a scarlet label-name blazing in one corner, and the spot-lit silhouette of the musicians huddled in the other.

The music therein was a baptism of fire for the 18-year-old me, beginning with an attack on the schoolday singalong of *Raggle Taggle Gypsy* that lifted into the

first O'Carolyn tune that I'd ever heard. Traditional songs such as *Arthur McBride* and *The Blacksmith* would never be bettered in subtlety and style. Throw in a couple of daring Irish protest songs, a sublime Ewan MacColl ballad and even an original composition, punctuated by reels, airs, and the catchiest of jigs, this was the album that opened the door for every Celtic band that has come after. Forty years later, I could probably sing you ever song right through, and give a halting but gamely shot at the instrumentals to boot.

Ironically, I can't remember too much about that first gig, which actually had the great Johnny Moynihan in place of Donal Lunny in the band's lineup by that time. I saw them another four or five times after that, later with Paul Brady instead of Christy Moore, and it's all melded into one precious memory, but once in a while I drag out that first album and relive the thrill. I've met and even played with some of the lads themselves a few times over the years, and it was hard for me not to be tongue-tied and wide-eyed when I did so. No wonder. For me there was *Rubber Soul*, there was *Free-wheelin'* Bob Dylan, there was *Hunky Dory*, and there was *Planxty*. Everything else was a bit pale after that.

Jez Lowe tours Canada from Oct 21 - 30
www.jezlowe.com



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stingray radio

1. **Poor Nameless Boy**
Bravery (Chronograph Records)
2. **Scott Nolan**
Silverhill (Transistor 66)
3. **The Bills**
Trail of Tales (Independent)
4. **The Paperboys**
At Peace With One's Ghosts (Borealis)
5. **Caitlin Canty**
Reckless Skyline (Independent)
6. **Mark Erelli**
For A Song (Independent)
7. **Solas**
All These Years (THL Records)
8. **Anna Tivel**
Heroes Waking Up (Fluff & Gravy Records)
9. **Kacy & Clayton**
Strange Country (Big White Cloud)
10. **Corin Raymond**
Hobo Jungle Fever Dreams (Local Rascal Records)

The most-played folk and roots discs played nationally by
Stingray Music throughout May, June, and July, 2016.

fred's records

1. **Rum Ragged**
Rum Ragged (Independent)
2. **The Once**
The Once (Borealis)
3. **Ron Hynes**
Later That Same Life (Independent)
4. **Fortunate Ones**
Bliss (Old Farm Pony)
5. **Dardanelles**
Eastern Light (Independent)

Based on album sales for May, June, and July, 2016, at
Fred's Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, 1C 1G5



Shawn Colvin and Steve Earle

kaia kater's all-time top 10



Kaia Kater

Amelia Curran
Hunter, Hunter (Six Shooter Records)

Hazel & Alice
Hazel & Alice (Rouder)

Daniel Lanois
For the Beauty of Wynona (Warners)

Sam Lee & Friends
The Fade in Time (Independent)

Emily Miller & Jesse Milnes
Deep End Sessions Vol. II (Independent)

Outlaw Social
Dry Bones (Independent)

Nina Simone
Nina Simone Sings the Blues (BMG Music)

Jayme Stone & Mansa Sissoko
Africa to Appalachia (Independent)

Oliver Swain
Never More Together (Independent)

Gillian Welch
Harrow and the Harvest (Acory Records)

Kaia Kater's latest release is called *Nine Pin*.
Our feature on Kaia runs on page 34.

blackbyrd

1. **Betty Davis**
Columbia Years 1968-1969 (Light in the Attic)
2. **Michael Kiwanuka**
Love & Hate (Polydor)
3. **Shawn Colvin & Steve Earle**
Colvin & Earle (Fantasy)
4. **case/lang/veirs**
case/lang/veirs (Anti)
5. **Kevin Morby**
Singing Saw (Dead Oceans)
6. **Margo Price**
Midwest Farmer's Daughter (Third Man)
7. **Various Artists**
Heartworn Highways (Light in the Attic)
8. **The Avett Brothers**
True Sadness (Republic)
9. **William Tyler**
Modern Country (Merge)
10. **Felice Brothers**
Life in the Dark (Yep Roc)

Based on album sales for May, June, and July, 2016 at Blackbyrd Myozik,
10442-52 Ave., Edmonton, AB, T6E 2A2 and at 1126-17 Ave., SW, Calgary, AB, T2T 0B4

highlife records

1. **Hailu Mergia**
Tche Belew (Awesome Tapes From Africa)
2. **Khari Wendell McClelland**
Fleeting Is The Time (Independent)
3. **case/lang/veirs**
case/lang/veirs (Anti)
4. **Various Artists**
Lost In Mali (Riverboat)
5. **Nina Simone**
Sings The Blues (RCA)
6. **St Germain**
St Germain (Warner)
7. **Songhoy Blues**
Music In Exile (Atlantic)
8. **The Lions**
This Generation (Stones Throw)
9. **Bombino**
Azul (Partisan)
10. **Lucinda Williams**
Ghosts Of Highway 20 (Thirty Tigers)

Based on album sales for May, June, and July, 2016, at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

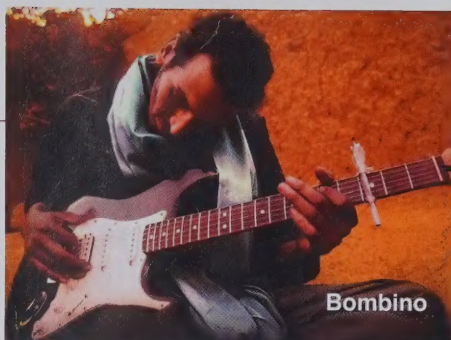
le knock out

1. **Tire le coyote**
panorama (La Tribu)
2. **Sufjan Steven**
Carrie & Lowell (Asthmatic Kitty)
3. **Angel Olsen**
Burn Your Fire For No Witness (Jagjaguwar)
4. **Bon Iver**
For Emma Forever (Jagjaguwar)
5. **Rodriguez**
Cold Fact (Light in the Attic)
6. **Wilco**
Star Wars (Anti)
7. **Lisa Leblanc**
Highways, Heartaches And Time Well Wasted (Independent)
8. **Fred Fortin**
Ultramar (Grosse Boite)
9. **case/lang/veirs**
case/lang/veirs (Anti)
10. **Basia Bulat**
Good Advice (Secret City)

Based on album sales for May, June, and July, 2016, at Le knock out 832 St-Joseph Est, Quebec City, QC, G1K 3C3



case, lang, veirs



backstreet records

1. **Tomato Tomato**
I Go Where You Go (Porch Light Studios)
2. **Ron Hynes**
Later That Same Life (Hynesite Music)
3. **Tedeschi Trucks Band**
Let Me Get By (Swamp Family)
4. **Matt Andersen**
Honest Man (True North Records)
5. **Sturgill Simpson**
A Sailor's Guide To Earth (Warner)
6. **Paul Simon**
Stranger To Stranger (Concord)
7. **The Small Glories**
Wondrous Traveler (Pheromone Records)
8. **The Avett Brothers**
True Sadness (Republic)
9. **The Jayhawks**
Paging Mr. Proust (Thirty Tigers)
10. **Chris Stapleton**
Traveller (Mercury)

Based on album sales for May, June, and July, 2016, at Backstreet Records, at their Saint John and Fredericton, NB, stores.

soundscapes

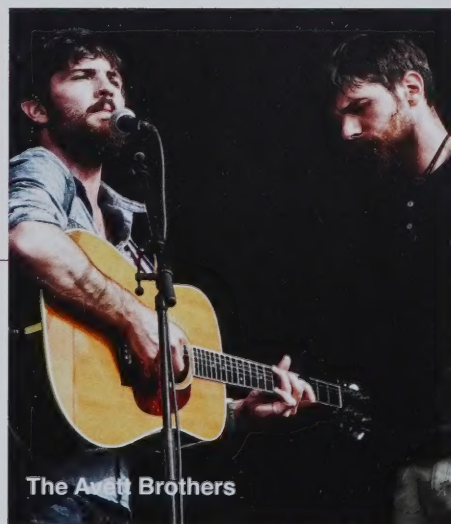
1. **case/lang/veirs**
case/lang/veirs (Anti)
2. **Andy Shauf**
The Party (Arts & Crafts)
3. **Bob Dylan**
Fallen Angels (Columbia)
4. **Paul Simon**
Stranger To Stranger (Concord)
5. **Sturgill Simpson**
A Sailor's Guide To Earth (Warners)
6. **Daniel Romano**
Mosey (Warners)
7. **Various Artists**
The Day of the Dead (4AD)
8. **Lucinda Williams**
The Ghosts Of Highway 20 (Highway 20 Records)
9. **The Jayhawks**
Paging Mr. Proust (Sham)
10. **Shawn Colvin & Steve Earle**
Colvin & Earle (Fantasy)

Based on album sales for May, June, and July, 2016, at Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, ON, M6G 1B3

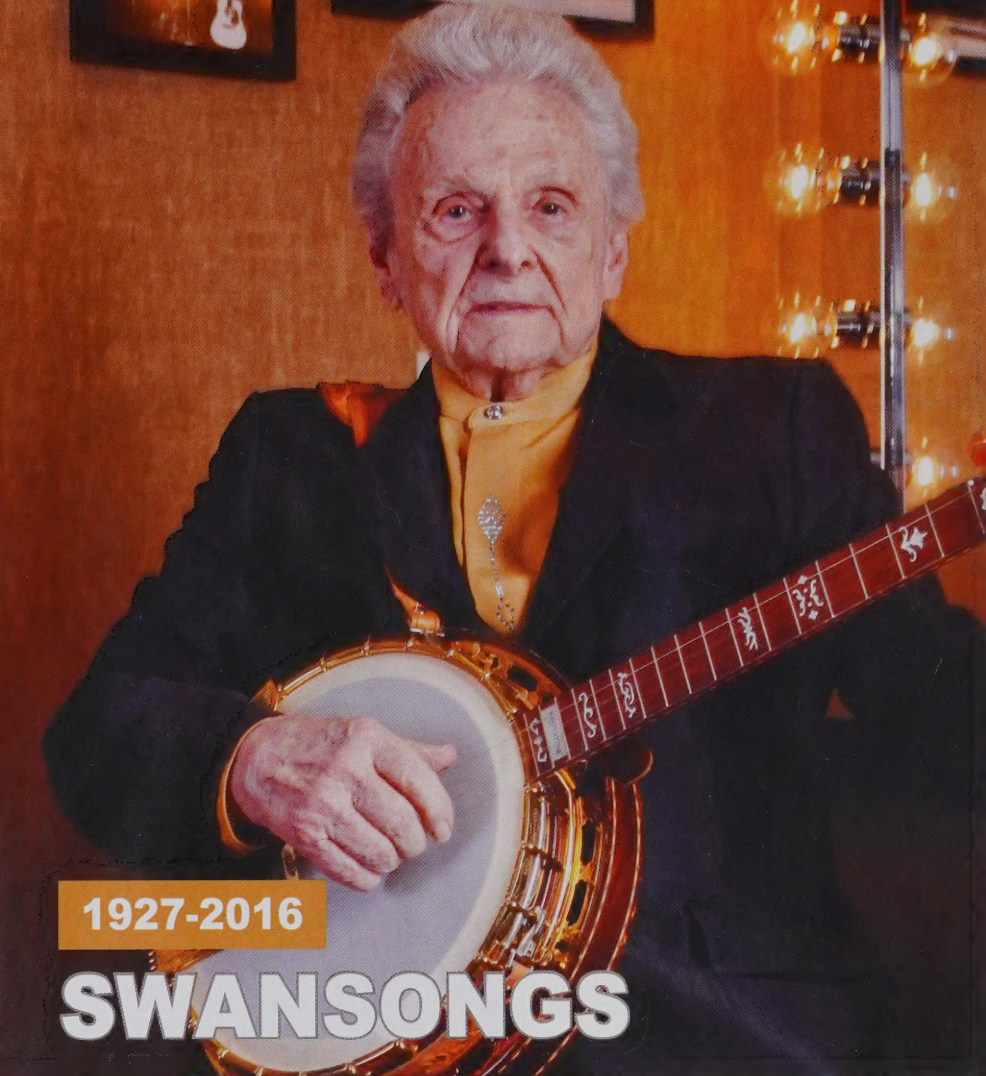
ckua radio

1. **case/lang/veirs**
case/lang/veirs (Anti)
2. **Danny Michel**
Matadora (Six Shooter)
3. **Sam Beam & Jesca Hoop**
Love Letter For Fire (Sub Pop Records)
4. **Paul Simon**
Stranger To Stranger (Concord)
5. **The Strumbellas**
Hope (Six Shooter)
6. **Shawn Colvin & Steve Earle**
Colvin & Earle (Fantasy)
7. **Basia Bulat**
Good Advice (Secret City)
8. **The Jayhawks**
Paging Mr. Proust (SHAM)
9. **Andy Shauf**
The Party (Arts & Crafts)
10. **Lakou Mizik**
Wa Di Yo (Cumbancha)
11. **Jason Collett**
Song And Dance Man (Arts & Crafts)
12. **Andrew Bird**
Are You Serious (Loma Vista)
13. **The Avett Brothers**
True Sadness (Republic)
14. **Band Of Horses**
Why Are You OK (Interscope)
15. **Amanda Rheaume**
Holding Patterns (Independent)
16. **Matthew Barber & Jill Barber**
The Family Album (Outside Music)
17. **Mariya May**
Call Me Back If You Can Dig The Music (Ten Dollar Recording)
18. **Eric Clapton**
I Still Do (Bushbranch)
19. **Teddy Thompson & Kelly Jones**
Little Windows (Cooking Vinyl)
20. **Anthony D'Amato**
Cold Snap (New West)

The most-played folk, roots and world music discs on CKUA radio - www.ckua.org - throughout May, June, and July, 2016.



The Avett Brothers



1927-2016

SWANSONGS

Ralph Stanley

Death didn't spare Ralph Stanley over 'til another year, silencing his legendary voice and hard-driving five-string banjo in June, at age 89. As news went viral and global, folks shared favourites from his singular 70-year career. Many recommended his superlative autobiography: *Man of Constant Sorrow: My Life and Times* (with Eddie Dean, 2009).

"I'm just an old hillbilly, and proud of it, too. Plain as an old shoe," he wrote. "Some politicians and preachers, they'll talk at you and not to you. I know correct and proper English just fine, but don't use it. I talk natural, the same way I sing, so I'm gonna give you my story like I was talking to you across the table."

Primitive, but not unpractised. And what a story and singer, the likes of which we will never see, or share, again.

Raised dirt-poor in coal-mining southwest

Virginia, he adapted his mother's clawhammer banjo and father's songs, sung in what he described as "God's voice, not mine." Performing at presidential inaugurations, earning numerous, prestigious awards, including an honorary doctorate (Lincoln Memorial University, 1976), he became widely known affectionately, as "Dr. Ralph."

Stanley will most likely be remembered for his ghostly, Grammy-winning, a cappella rendition of *O Death*, on the platinum soundtrack *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

He was among the elite triumvirate of Bill Monroe and Flatt and Scruggs, the last of the first-generation bluegrass bandleaders. With his brother, Carter, he formed the Clinch Mountain Boys in 1946. They helped develop breakneck rhythms, impeccably timed arrangements, close harmonies in high registers, and jazz-like improvisational breaks.

Carter composed classics, including *White Dove*, *The Lonesome River*, and *Fields Have Turned Brown*. Their version of *Rank Stranger* is a signal achievement, in a rich legacy that includes prolific recordings, high baritone over Ralph's haunting, stratospheric tenor, and first to feature cross-picking lead guitar.

Carter succumbed to alcoholism (1966) but Ralph — shy by his own account — carried on, digging deeper into his roots. In 1971 he told me: "I play old-time mountain style of what-they-call-bluegrass music, a mouthful, but about the best I can come up with."

Then, his band included teenaged Keith Whitley and Ricky Skaggs, discovered singing to a waiting crowd when Stanley arrived late for a concert. Skaggs said: "He carried ancient sounds he found in the mountains, in the hollows, in the people, and in the churches."

His style, as old as time, was rooted in white and black gospel and old-world modal chanting. At age eight, he led the local congregation (which banned instruments) in a Primitive Baptist hymn, mesmerizing all present with his "thousand-year-old voice," which he continued until his last days.

"As far back as I can remember, I had an old-time mountain voice, weathered and lived-in, like something you'd hear moaning in the woods, late of a night," he explained.

T-Bone Burnett's must-have roots soundtrack threads *Man of Constant Sorrow* through the *O Brother* movie, a virtual homage to the Stanleys, closing on their 1955 recording of *Angel Band*.

Dr. Ralph recorded otherworldly vocal harmonies in duets with many admirers, including Bob Dylan, George Jones, Elvis Costello, and Robert Plant. More soulful than showy, stardom didn't tempt him, fame couldn't pry him from his mountain home, and commercial success never smoothed his gnarled sound. All he wanted was to make a living, and, he said, "do it the way I feel it."

— Bruce Mason





Karl Dallas

Music Journalist, Songwriter, Political Activist
Born 1931

The folknik and peacenik Karl Frederick Dallas was born on Jan. 29, 1931, in Acton, Middlesex, then the county to the west of London. He grew up in a household to politically engaged parents, Nancy (née Knowles) and Stanley Ernest (Jack) Dallas, whom he described in his book *One Hundred Songs of Toil* as “engineer by trade and agitator by conviction 1880-1957”. “I was enrolled in the Independent Labour Party on the day of my birth and named after Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels,” he told *The Guardian* in April 2013. In a turn-about that surprised many, Dallas declared himself a Christian in 1983. His political engagement did not wane. Gloriously, came the 2003 Iraq war; he went there as part of a human shield, guitar in hand. What was not to love?

Dallas came through the ranks. He sang on protest lines and at demonstrations. As Fred Dallas, Alfie Bass & the Four Bailiffs recorded his song *Housing Repairs and Rents Act*. His song *Derek Bentley* entered Ewan MacColl’s repertoire and opened MacColl’s *Chorus From The Gallows*. He contributed three original songs — *Strontium 90*, *Hey Little Man (No Place To Hide)*, and *Doomsday Blues* — to the Topic LP *Songs Against The Bomb* (1959). He and his first wife Betty also appeared on *Rock-et Along – New Ballads on Old Lines* (1960).

His first folk music journalism appeared in the British weekly music paper *Melody Maker* in 1957. Through jostling and jockeying for position he became Britain’s most influential folk music critic of his generation, elbowing out the likes of Eric Winter. When I first ran into, and wrote for, Dallas in the early 1980s, he had an ego-and-a-half. By then I had new ideas about presenting folk music, in part because I realized his ‘command’ of Hindustani classical music was barely a page ahead of mine. In disagreement and opposition, I realized how great a writer he was. He died on June 21, 2016, in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

– Ken Hunt



Dave Swarbrick

Trailblazing Fiddler and Songwriter
Born 1941

In December 1969, Island Records released Fairport Convention’s *Liege & Lief*. A hinge moment in the British folk revival; after it, Europe’s folk scene could never be the same. One of the paramount reasons for its cultural impact was it marked fiddle player Dave Swarbrick’s grand entrance in the biggest band in folk-rock. In 2006 in the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards the voice of the people was heard: it was voted the ‘most influential folk album of all time’. In him Fairport Convention found its third major songwriter. Richard Thompson’s writings had, as Graham Greene put it, the required “splinter of ice in the heart.” Preternaturally gifted, his songs complemented Sandy Denny’s writings with their deep inner and introspective core. Swarbrick’s songs complemented – in the main accessible and easy on the ear.

A graduate of the skiffle movement, Swarbrick had switched to fiddle from the ubiquitous guitar at the behest of the pianist, Beryl Marriott. The group that cleared the path before Fairport was the Ian Campbell Folk Group. On a train from Birmingham to London, Swarbrick heard the sound of music coming from a compartment. He poked his head around the door and asked to sit in. That evening he guested at their London concert. First appearing on their debut EP, *Ceilidh at the Crown* (1962), he stayed with them until joining MartinCarthy in 1965 – a relationship as close and forgiving as two non-brothers could ever be.

Time showed Swarbrick was the principal

hand in writing the book of British folk fiddle. A meticulous craftsman, he worked on one of his finest, latter-period solo albums, *raison d’être* (2010) from 2002 to 2010. Interviewing him in his upstairs music room in Coventry for an article about that album, he played the unmixed *Burns/Marley Red Rose Medley* and Alistair Hulett’s *Among Proddy Dogs And Papes* from his and Jason Wilson’s *Lion Rampart* (2013). Afterwards we had audibly whooped and laughed so much that we were questioned whether we had done an interview.

He was born David Cyril Eric Swarbrick, the second son and third child to Frederick Cyril and Maidie (Mabel) Swarbrick on April 5, 1941, in New Malden, Surrey. In 1999 he joined the select company of the painter Richard Dadd, author, poet, and actress Mary ‘Perdita’ Robinson and folksong collector Sabine Baring-Gould, having his own obituary in the Daily Telegraph on April 29, 1999, read out to him. He quipped, “It’s not the first time I have died in Coventry.” (He made a point of selling and signing photocopies of the obituary, much to the displeasure of the newspaper’s legal representatives.) In October 2004 he underwent a double lung transplant, becoming one of the world’s longest-lived survivors of such an operation.

He was married eight times to seven wives. He finally found happiness with a kindred artistic spirit, the painter and the artist in residence to Coventry Cathedral (2012), Jill Banks-Swarbrick. He died on June 3, 2016, at the Bronglais General Hospital in Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, Wales. Arguably no single folk musician ever had a greater impact across Europe.

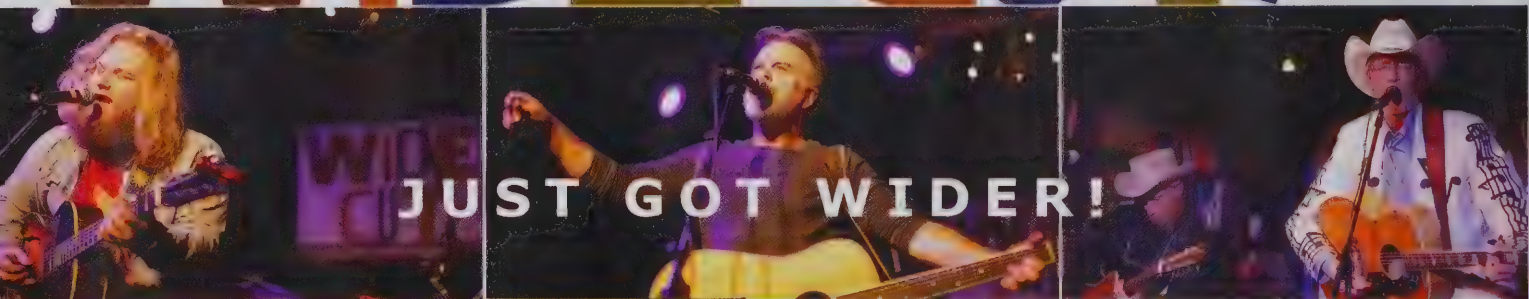
– Ken Hunt

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Penny Lang

Doyenne of Montreal's fledgling folk scene
Born 1942

I first met Penny Lang in 1963 while we were both working as councillors at the Old Brewery Mission's Camp Chapleau in the Laurentians north of Montreal.

I had been playing guitar for about five years at that point and thought, 'Hey, I can play this thing pretty well.' But whoa, who was this gal from the girl's camp down the road that just blew me away? I had never heard anyone play rhythm guitar like that. Besides, she could belt out a song with a conviction belying her years. Obviously, I had a ways to go...

A few years later in 1967 I arrived in Montreal and started playing music full time. By now Penny was well established on the coffee house circuit, travelling to New York, Philadelphia, and Toronto as well as holding down long-running gigs at Café André, a popular bistro just off the McGill campus. Penny was playing with two accompanists, guitarist Roma Baran and ace harmonica player Don Audet.

That trio practiced almost daily when they weren't gigging and as a result the music they produced was as good as anything you could hear at the time, or today for that matter.

In this age of singer/songwriters we often forget just what an art song interpretation can be. Penny Lang was a master at ferreting out great

songs and making them her own. Songs such as James Taylor's *Carolina In My Mind*, Brownie McGee's *Living With The Blues*, Fred Neil's *The Dolphins*, Bruce Murdoch's *Come Across To You*, and, of course, Leonard Cohen's *Suzanne*. The latter she famously turned down the offer to record as she felt the arrangement the record company wanted was just too syrupy.

All of these became identified with Penny as she wrapped them up in her own musical voice. I have no doubt that by learning these and a score of traditional songs prepared her well for songs that she would write later.

Penny was a natural bandleader and if you speak to anyone who played with her, they'll tell you she was a joy to play with. Not only that, those same folks all came away learning something new. Whether it was a certain guitar strum, a particular way of phrasing, or some other aspect of stagecraft, all of us who played with her came away with new skills.

Penny was a great friend, a partner, a mother, grandmother, and sister and as such we will all miss her. We'll miss her laugh, her generous spirit, and her love.

However, for all of us who were touched by her songs, and learned from her music, that spirit and those lessons learned will live on for a very long time.

Born in the east end of Montreal in 1942, Penny Lang died July 31 from a stroke, at her home in Madeira Park, BC. She was 74.

— Bill Garrett

Lonnie Mack

Blues-rock guitar innovator
Born 1941

Lonnie Mack's 1963 instrumental guitar version of Chuck Berry's *Memphis* leaped to No. 4 on Billboard's R&B charts and No. 5 on its pop charts. It sold more than a million copies. From a guitar player's perspective, the equally successful followup, *Wham!*, was even more amazing with its flamboyant use of tremelo and Mack's astonishing, breakneck playing. Indeed, after the release of *Wham!* the tremolo bar became known worldwide as a 'whammy bar'. As the *Chicago Tribune* later wrote: "With the wiggle of a whammy bar and a blinding run of notes [on] his classic Gibson Flying V, Lonnie Mack launched the modern guitar era."

His 1964 album, *The Wham of the Memphis Man*, inspired the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jeff Beck, Duane Allman, Keith Richards, and Jimmy Page. Reissued in 1968, it received a rave review from *Rolling Stone* magazine that led to substantial bookings at such venues as Bill Graham's Fillmore East and West.

Mack then signed with Elektra, recorded three albums, and played bass guitar on The Doors' hit *Roadhouse Blues*. While his profile dipped in the '70s, he emerged in the early '80s at the urging of his protegee, Stevie Ray Vaughan. Vaughan produced Mack's 1985 album for Alligator, *Strike Like Lightning*. On the subsequent national tour, Keith Richards, Ron Wood, Ry Cooder, Albert Collins, and Roy Buchanan would all join Mack onstage. He was inducted into the International Guitar Hall of Fame in 2001 and the Rockabilly Hall of Fame in 2005. Mack recorded 11 albums in all.

Born Lonnie McIntosh on July 18, 1941, in West Harrison, IN, he died of natural causes in Smithville, TN, on April 21, aged 74.

— Roddy Campbell



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Folk Music Canada will oversee FolkNorth—a new industry event that will provide export-targeted showcases and professional development for Canadian folk artists. The event runs Nov. 30 to Dec. 3 and coincides with the Canadian Folk Music Awards. Tamara Kater is Folk Music Canada's executive director.

Questions by **Roddy Campbell.**

How has FolkNorth come about?

The board of directors of Folk Music Canada realized that there was no place for the Canadian folk industry to gather and do business on a national basis. The reality is that if we want to support the robust art form that is folk music in Canada, we need to understand how to do business that helps feed the art form, that lets the art be the art, but create viable revenue and sustainable living expenses for the artists, for the managers, and for everyone who works in the sector. And that's the part that the organization thought needed some help.

We've developed some really great relationships with the folk industry in the U.S. and U.K. in particular. And we want to invite some of those people here to do business. We're really hoping that we'll be able to build deeper trade relations, help artists build their careers, and strengthen the folk industry in Canada.

Who are you inviting?

We are mainly focusing on presenters—buyers—people who have the capacity to offer artists performance opportunities, as well as agents, managers and record labels. We are going to bring in some Canadian folk presenters as well. They have never really gathered on a national level, that I am aware of. However that is the portion of funding that we are still waiting on so we are going to be issuing those invitations a little later in the planning cycle.

What about artists?

They have to apply. There is a jury process for the applicants. Because of funding criteria and the goals of the event, we are looking for artists who are familiar with international touring. They would, hopefully, have a label or a manager or an agent—someone who would be at least two albums into their career and be ready to push into the international market. It could also be artists who are already very strong in one market but want to develop another. Some artists are very strong in the U.K. but want to develop in the U.S. further.

There will be 24 showcasing artists from



Canada and eight from international markets. Part of the goal, for us, is to build trade relationships with the U.S. and U.K., so we are inviting artists from there to apply, too. We hope to add Australia in future years and maybe Germany and France.

How are you funding FolkNorth?

We have 85% of our budget confirmed. Our two major funding partners are the Department of International Trade and FACTOR. We have been accessing some of their funding to do work outside of Canada at various folk conferences. We've been doing outbound work for quite a few years and we felt that we were at the point where we could bring people into Canada. And we all felt that we had enough of an infrastructure and a reputation in the North American folk community that we could get the right artists and the right players to come to this event.

FolkNorth runs the same weekend as the Folk Music awards in Toronto. No coincidence, surely?

It is not a coincidence. Toronto is a good city to have an event like this in regards to the cost and convenience of bringing in international delegates. If you're inviting someone from the

U.K. or U.S., the more airports they have to go through, the more costly it is for us and the less appetizing it is for them. In relationship to the folk music awards, we did do that intentionally so that we could offer the Canadians who come to the folk music awards the opportunity to arrive a few days earlier and have some business opportunities. We were very sensitive to the fact that we didn't want artists and managers paying to go to an additional event. We thought that, especially with this being our first year, it would help people get to know our event.

What about next year when the CFMAs are in Calgary?

At the moment, this is a one-year event, as we have not secured multi-year funding. However, the board is working on the assumption that this will become a recurring event. We are not working on following the CFMAs. It's just the way it worked out this first year.

There's also a strong chance that the event would remain in Toronto. There's a strong message from our funding sources that they are not fans of itinerant events. It's not a model the funders are working with. Following the [CFMAs], that moves around, might take up resources that are unnecessary and could actually be channeled into our event.

Introducing Jadea Kelly



Surely somewhere in the hot top 10 of rhetorical questions float the ancient queries: where would storytelling be without heartbreak? Does the telling ease the pain? It's been mulled over and mined and mauled since bipeds first rubbed pigment on walls and formed syllables around open fires. These days, when it's done properly, tellingly, movingly, we call it art.

So—without getting too grand about it—it goes for Jadea Kelly's recently released fourth CD, *Love+Lust*, a wise and affecting collection of meditations on matters human and primal.

There are those singer/songwriters extant who have made fabulous careers out of being coy on the breakup theme. Not so Kelly, who, if not exactly naming names, makes no bones about the theme of her latest work, 11 songs culled from 65 demos.

"Yes, it's my own *Jagged Little Pill*," she offers over the phone from Toronto. "I loved that album, and songs like Dolly Parton's *Jolene* or Lucinda Williams's *Car Wheels on A Gravel Road*. (Conveying) that very much heartfelt, brutal honesty is the job of the songwriter, it seems to me." To wit: "How can I feel when it's you I hate/Tired of lying/Tired of truth/Tired of pain/Wanna feel it with you."

That's from *Make it Easy*, the poignant single, lead track, and last song recorded for *Love+Lust* and the subject of a stunning, sensual Gaelle Legrand-produced video, where song lyrics are printed on Kelly's body parts and (tastefully!) followed along by the camera.

"It's about desire and I wanted to show that almost desperate thing in the most personal way." Job completed. Successfully.

As to the album, with Toronto production help from Stew Crookes, Tom Juhas, and Robyn Dell'Unto, Kelly and her crew have fashioned a near-seamless, atmospheric work that approaches the songs at the intersection of folk, country, and pop in a package that might have had the Daniel Lanois imprimatur if we didn't know better.

She grew up listening to good country and folk music in a sensible Whitby, ON, middle-class home with two siblings and a seamstress mother and dad who worked in the famous GM plant down the road in Oshawa. There were no musicians aboard, but young Jadea was encouraged in her musical aspirations, which budded early, from fiddle to flute to guitar.

Life skills in the music biz came quickly, too. Following an English degree at University of Toronto, she interned with veteran Canadian music operative Richard Flohil, long a champion of quality roots music. "I was 21 and he took the blinders off. We'd go to the Cameron House after work and he'd introduce me to musicians, people who were actually doing what I wanted to do. I learned the cost of it all, and how important

it is to be a musician and an honest writer."

She's lately put her things in storage and made a move to Nashville. That said, she assures us that she is NOT headed to the corporate likes of the city's Music Row.

"There are many Canadians in Nashville. I live near friends, and I'm there to hone my craft. I love playing in Canada and have had my share of homesickness, but I almost think it's important for Canadians to move away for a time to broaden your opportunities. I miss home, but it's inspiring there."

Crowd-sourced and available in Canada via Fontana North, but still looking for a U.S. deal for *Love+Lust*, Kelly hopes listeners who have been in a similar emotional place "will find some healing here. The songs aren't spiteful but stories I hope can help someone to regain hope and find a voice."

— By Alan Kellogg





Introducing Mohsin Zaman

Mohsin Zaman waited until his parents fell asleep before sneaking into their living room to quietly teach himself guitar. “There was a cultural barrier that didn’t allow me to pursue music beyond that,” he says, over coffee in Edmonton’s hipster Remedy Cafe.

Born in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, into a strict Pakistani family, Zaman’s musical journey had its fair share of bumps along the way.

“I moved to Kamloops, BC, in 2008 to pursue a business degree and worked in banking until last year. I was trying to do the nine-to-five thing, but I hated it. As cliched as it sounds, music is the only thing that I can imagine doing full time, and the more I do it, the more I feel like it is the only thing I can do on a permanent basis.”

But perhaps Mohsin’s difficult journey was a necessary struggle with gainful results.

“I had to strive to find my form of expression. It’s like when something is there, but not quite there. Music is much more special to me now because I’ve had to struggle being around it.”

After moving from Kamloops to Edmonton two and a half years ago, his music began to take precedence. “I didn’t know anyone in Edmonton, so I started going to open mic nights and that’s pretty much how I met people. The people here are amazing. Everyone is supportive and pushy in the right ways.” Now Zaman has established himself as a local treasure, winning Male Artist of the Year at the 2016 Edmonton Music Awards. He spreads his love for music throughout the province, performing at large events like the Edmonton and Canmore Folk Music Festivals, as well as in non-traditional venues, such as parkades, trolleys, and airports. His recent album, *Fly Home*, as well as his 2015 debut, *Waking Up*, were both recorded in Edmonton at Riverdale Recorders with local producer Harry Gregg.

There is a soulfulness and genuine vulnerability in Zaman’s music that renders it more human. Drawing inspiration from his past and present, he weaves an international musical tapestry of empathy and experience. “I’m inspired by my roots, my culture, my Pakistani heritage, my travels, my family, and the people around me. Whatever hits the soul is basically what inspires me.”

All the tracks on *Fly Home*, from the ardent *Better Man* to the Southeast Asian inspired *Darkest Days*, are interwoven with a harmonious, ambient folk flow. His music radiates a soft, heartfelt energy, lit with an inner, connective spark. This man creates for others as much as for himself; Zaman wants people to read into his music, interpret it, and ultimately make it their own.

“We are surrounded by sound, but when conscious thought is put in outside of nature’s music, it becomes this great human connective source. The more I play with it, the more I realize how strong it is. I just hope that people can connect to my music emotionally. If that happens, then that is what’s going to keep fuelling this crazy adventure.”

– By Michelle Hahn-Baker



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Introducing Doolin'

This article has three Doolins.

The first Doolin is a place on the windswept coast of County Clare, Ireland, with three bars famous for their cracking Irish music sessions.

The second Doolin' – with apostrophe – is a six-piece band from Toulouse, France, inspired by the music found in Doolin and such places.

The third *Doolin'* is a fine self-titled album by Doolin', with a photo of the musicians in an Irish bar, possibly in Doolin.

Doolin' was not made anywhere near Doolin, however, but in Nashville, Tennessee where banjo ace Alison Brown and her husband Garry West live. The cofounders of Compass Records shared a stage with Doolin' in France, and were impressed by the band's innovative and eclectic approach to Irish music.

"They offered to let us record at their place," says Jacob Fournel, who plays flutes and whistles with Doolin'. "They're good friends of [Irish guitar-great] John Doyle and asked him to be the artistic producer. We sent demos, and he got back with ideas for arrangements, harmonies and chords - a bit different from our own. In Nashville we reworked things together - and John really helped our singer with pronunciation and intonation."

Doyle also contributed as musician. "He plays electric guitar on *Famine*", an adaptation of a song by Sinéad O'Connor that we've given a modern treatment – kind of the meeting of disco, hip hop, and traditional music. John plays the theme, and some guitar in a funky, jazzy style." Most tunes are trad', or written in that vein, and played with verve and precision in the contemporary style.

Founded in 2005, Doolin' quickly became well-connected with leading Irish musicians. Jacob and his bodhran-playing brother Josselin travelled to Ireland to learn from masters like Carmel Gunning, Sean Ryan, Colm O'Donnell, Brid O'Donoghue, and Junior Davey.

"We went out to find the best and collaborate with them. It began with Desi Wilkinson, the flute-player, with whom we played here in France. Josselin and I, our fiddler Guilhem Cavaillé too, are very drawn to the instrumental side of Irish music. The others - Nicolas Besse [guitar], Wilfried Besse [vocals and accordion] and Sébastien Saunié [bass] - came to Irish music through songs, inspired by the Pogues, the Dubliners, even U2. And those two sides cohabit in what we do."

There's a dark unifying thread to *Doolin'* – famine, and more particularly the Irish famine of the 1840s and the mass emigration it provoked, dispersing Irish men and women and their music to ports around the world. The songs come from a spectrum of genres. "It's more the cultural consequences we wanted to mark – like the massive influence it had on American music, and how that music in part came back to Europe with pop and country."

Doolin' features imaginative settings of O'Connor's *Famine*, Steve Earle's jaunty *The Galway Girl*, and Bob Dylan's stark *The Ballad of Hollis Brown* – as well as a couple of compositions by band-members. Nicolas also adapts a poem by Oscar Wilde's mum and gives it music.

The most surprising track is chansonnier Jacques Brel's passionate rant *Amsterdam*, a request from Garry West. "Compass wanted a song that affirmed our Francophone identity, and it worked best with our theme – the port as a point of transit for emigrants. It's a song we all love, and John wrote an instrumental for it."

Doolin' undertakes its first transatlantic tour next February. "The album is our first distributed in North America," says Jacob. "Recording in Nashville in such a high-quality studio, with John Doyle as producer, was an extraordinary experience - and it's given us new inspiration."

– By Tony Montague



Introducing Twin Bandit



The PE interview with Twin Bandit is done, and we're sitting on the terrace outside a café in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside chatting about how reluctant some artists are to acknowledge influences and roots in their original music, when Hannah Walker makes me reach again for the recorder. As she speaks her eyes become even more animated:

"People are often afraid of creating music that's lending from something that already exists, and I would argue it's the opposite – we should be very, very proud of our rich history of music and we should be sharing, and we should be drawing from those who went before us who were creating these things that have inspired us as young people that are now just entering into the world of music."

Appropriately, it's sharing a much-loved traditional song that brought Hannah and fellow acoustic guitar-wielding bandita Jamie Elliott together.

Hannah was born, raised, and continues to live in the DTES – home for many challenged and distressed people, the poor but vibrant underbelly of Lotusland – where her mother founded a non-profit inner-city program for kids, the Saint James Music Academy. She and Jamie met in the kitchen there three years ago.

"I came in to volunteer my services and Hannah was working that first day, and it was what she's called 'love at first song'," says Jamie. "I was singing *Down to the River to Pray*, an old Appalachian tune that had been turned into a gospel song – Alison Krauss does a version that was featured on [the film] *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* After that we were attached to the hip."

The two quickly started making music together, and as they came to know each other better the songs – a savvy West Coast blend of folk, with country flavours – began to flow. "We did some writing up in Hannah's cabin in Birken [north of Whistler] and that influenced our songs a bit," says Jamie. "It's just off the railroad, so we'd go to the tracks at night and write sometimes. It gets you feeling really nostalgic, that's for sure."

Soon Twin Bandit, as they styled themselves, had enough material for an album, produced by Hannah's friend Jon Anderson. *For You* is a haunting collection of original songs remarkable for the bittersweet moods they conjure, the simple beauty of their vocal harmonies, and its chemistry of close musical friendship.

Since then, life has been intense for Jamie and Hannah. The dizzy heights include *For You's* critical acclaim, an inspiring first European tour in Germany and Switzerland with all venues packed, a songwriting trip to Jamaica, and – just before the interview – performing at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival, where they attended as kids.

As for the next albums, fans of Twin Bandit can expect the same attention to detail and quality, and some interesting changes.

"I think some tracks will be more stripped down and a bit more traditional," says Hannah. "That said, we're interested in experimenting with other kinds of instrumentation, and bending the folk genre farther for other tunes. We're both really inspired by beachy, surfy music like the Beach Boys, and drawn to the concept of acknowledging the heavier things of life but also being able to create something that still has a drive, and can be seen in a positive light. That's what we're going for."

– By Tony Montague





Introducing Kiérah

You hate reaching for the obvious word—but how else to describe Kiérah except as ‘precocious’? She’s just 20 years old and already has three albums of Celtically inspired music under her belt, with a fourth in mid-production. And you know Kiérah is on rock-solid ground here, when one of the contributors is Michael McGoldrick—the ace and deuce of Irish pipes, flutes, and whistles—and when she’s currently backed in concert by two of Victoria’s finest musicians, guitarist Adam Dobres and multi-instrumentalist Adrian Dolan.

Fast rewind to five-year-old Kiérah in a classical violin class in White Rock, BC, where she still lives. “One day a fiddler came in and taught me my first jig, *The Swallow’s Tail*, and I just loved that style and the freedom you could have with Celtic music. When I was seven, I went to my first fiddle camp with instructors from Cape Breton, Scotland, and Ireland. I was there nine times and the variety of teachers influenced me in all different styles—including French-Canadian.”

The milestones of achievement flash past. By the age of 10, Kiérah was writing some of her own fiddle tunes. A year or so later she released her debut *Irish Madness* (2010)—the name of her website—and followed it with *A Fiddle Affair* (2012). Both were nominated for Canadian Folk Music Awards, and by now Kiérah had enough tunes to publish a book of her original compositions, *Kiérah’s Collection*, which earned her a two-week stint in the summer music program at the University of Limerick.

“It was called Blas, the Irish word for taste—an appropriate title because it gave us a taste of music, history, and an hour a day of Irish language. And I learned a million tunes! After that I travelled around the country with my parents, playing at a different pub every night with the local musicians. I hope to go back there this winter. I’ve also been to Cape Breton, at the Buddy MacMaster Fiddle Camp, and (the late) Jerry Holland and Wendy MacIsaac were my teachers.”

Kiérah’s travels and training have provided the knowledge and confidence in playing the old tunes that enables her to put together a set of Irish or Scottish tunes—or new ones so inspired—in new ways, without bending out of shape the emotional core of the music. “I love to mix original tunes with traditional, and make the traditional tunes sound modern. When I’m writing I love to play around with rhythms and harmonies you wouldn’t normally hear in a traditional tune. I like complicated tunes and often struggle the most with the ones I write in this way! Irish music flows very smoothly whereas I like to throw in something like jumps and leaps from a low string to a high string.”

With her third release, *Stonemason’s Daughter*, Kiérah bagged the prize of Young Performer of the Year (sponsored by *Penguin Eggs*)

at the 2013 Canadian Folk Music Awards, and she promises more Celtic explorations on the forthcoming album.

“It’s being produced by Adrian, and will be more modern—very contemporary traditional music—with a lot of my own tunes. We’ve added some variety of instrumentation I’ve never recorded with before—like a drum kit and electric guitar. Just little flavours here and there, nothing overwhelming but extra textures to bring something new and attractive to the table.”

– By Tony Montague





Ten Strings and a Goat Skin

With judicious flair and musical intuition, this trad' trio take a giant artistic leap forward.

By Doug Gallant

Caleb Gallant was just 12 years old when his mother came home from a fiddle festival with a record that changed the way he viewed traditional music.

The record, an early release by Quebec's De Temps Antan, made the future percussionist for folk/fusion trio Ten Strings and a Goat Skin want to play the kind of music they were playing because it was so different from anything he'd heard in P.E.I.

"I put it in the car when my mother was driving us to town and I was floored by everything," Caleb said. "It was totally different... way more interesting, the arrangements were super intricate, and there was so much energy coming from it. That's when I started listening all the time."

Caleb's brother, Rowen, the trio's gifted young fiddle player, credits a concert featuring De Temps Antan's André Brunet and Vishten's Pascal Mioussé with having the same effect on him.

"Before that, anything I'd experienced was very localized, very kind of traditional oriented," Rowen said. "I hadn't heard anything that dynamic with such modern elements. That was the first time I'd experienced music so vibrant and energetic."

And they'd already been exposed to a lot of great music by that time. When your uncle is award-winning singer/songwriter Lennie Gallant that's bound to happen. There were other members of their extended family who played as well.

Guitarist Jesse Périard was introduced to trad' music a little later than the brothers Gallant when he connected with them in junior high. But he has devoured that music ever since.

All three are passionate about creating music that pays homage to the traditional Irish, Scottish, and Acadian music they grew up around but take that music to a whole other place by infusing it with more contemporary elements and rhythmic changes.

That passion, coupled with the joy and the excitement that comes from working in a highly charged creative environment with like-minded souls helped Caleb, Rowe, and Jesse deliver their much anticipated and universally well-received sophomore release *Auprès du Poêle* (*Around the Woodstove*).

Working with producer Leonard Podolak of

The Duhks, the power trio crafted an album that has established Ten Strings and a Goat Skin as one of the country's most exciting progressive roots acts, augmented with a Hammond B3, a crazed pump organ and taut vocal harmonies.

Rowen says the new record is less anchored in traditional structures than their first record, *Corbeau*, released three years ago.

That their music would continue to evolve during that period was a given, considering the growth of each member of the band as a musician, their growing cohesiveness as a musical unit, and the diversity of the music they've been exposed to as they travelled the world.

Jesse noted that they were relatively inexperienced when they recorded *Corbeau*.

"When we did *Corbeau* we were still fresh, didn't know too much about what we were doing, the kind of sound we wanted, and we didn't have the skill sets to make the kind of sound that we wanted," he said.

That's not the case anymore.

"We've figured out what we want to sound like," Caleb says. "We've gone to several festivals now, met a lot of people, toured quite a bit. We've gotten a lot of exposure and been exposed to a lot. And all of that, whether we see it or not, has influenced us personally and musically," he added.

Rowen said the new record reflects some of the diverse influences they've been exposed to on the festival circuit.

Some of the larger folk festivals have been particularly influential.

"It's not boxed-in traditional music," Rowen said. "One of the first major American folk festivals we went to was Rhythm and Roots in Rhode Island. It was incredible, such a melding of different styles and they come together seamlessly. On one stage you'd have a folk/pop group and the next stage over you've got Cajun dance music from Louisiana, three-hour sets and everybody dances."

Jesse says touring has exposed them to a lot of other traditional bands that have been brought up playing the festival circuit and who have been able to implement musical ideas from all these different styles.

"And they do so seamlessly, without compromising what is, at its face, their traditions," Rowen adds.

Their inspiration was not limited to what they were exposed to on the road.

In recording *Auprès du Poêle*, they got a lot of very good advice from their producer.

"One of the biggest things that Leonard told us to do, that allowed us to go away and think of ways in which we could go about changing things, was to never play the same part the

same way twice," Rowen says. "So if you do an A-part B-part A-part B-part, it's going to be different versions. There's going to be some main theme that's going to be changing."

"We did that for every single song. We wanted to make sure that there was no repetition, that it wasn't going to become monotonous. He allowed us to think of what else we could do."

They entered the studio with roughly 70 per cent of the material written and/or arranged for the record. That left them some room to experiment and that was a good experience because some of the strongest numbers on the record came out of last-minute ideas.

"*Coal Not Dole*, that came about just the day before we recorded it. It's a very simple track but very powerful," Rowen says.

That song, as well as a couple of others, such as *Alan Macpherson of Mossbank*, were recommended by Podolak. He was like the fourth member of the group for the entire project.

"He didn't overstep but he wanted to make sure we tried every idea that came across the table. We were very open to everything. It was the most comfortable back and forth we've ever had in the industry," said Caleb.

Jesse said they also had the benefit of another pair of experienced ears in the studio in their engineer, Mark Busic, who could hear any individual note that wasn't right on the first take on

his side of the board.

"He always had that little encouraging 'I think you can do another take'."

They had other help as well. Three members of The Duhks played on the record. Also guesting were members of Montreal's alt-folk favourites *Les Poules à Colin*.

Another member of the Gallant clan also had a hand in this project. Their aunt, Karen Gallant, a respected Island artist whose work has been utilized by Lennie Gallant for several projects, did the cover art for *Auprès du Poêle*. Initial response to the record has been highly favourable. Which will likely translate to even more time on the road, where the response has also been overwhelmingly positive.

Brian O'Donovan, writing about the Burren Backroom Sessions, held in the Boston Irish pub this year, put it this way:

"Probably one of the most exciting and progressive new roots groups to come through the Burren in some time...The future of these boys is huge. Traditional music – roots and branches – on both sides of the Atlantic, is in very good hands!"

In 2014 they made the Kansas City Star's list of top traditional acts at that year's Folk Alliance. And the album has already cracked the top 20 on Billboard's world music charts. Not bad for three guys who are all under 25.

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Tim Hus

A unique songwriter initiates a warm tribute to his friend and mentor, Stompin' Tom Connor.

By Michelle Hahn-Baker

Tim Hus carried the casket draped with a maple leaf flag as thousands of Canadians watched in mourning. Stompin' Tom Connors had passed away at the age of 77. Hus, his friend and fellow musician, served as a pallbearer.

Three years later, Hus celebrates Connors's life with *Across the Land in Songs and Stories*, a musical tribute that will tour across Canada next year.

It's a project that began on Feb. 9, 2014, Connors's first birthday since his passing in 2013. Hus and his band performed a collection of his songs in a tribute so warmly welcomed that they decided to tour it.

"This way, people who didn't get to see Tom,

or didn't get to see Tom and I together, get to relive that experience," says Hus. "We'll play some of his songs, some of my songs, and basically make it a coast-to-coast Canadiana show, the way he always did."

That being said, Hus stresses that this is not an impersonation of a Connors show, a fact that truly sets his tribute apart. As seen in an early run of the show, this is Connors's old friend honouring him with a set list composed of both of their songs, interposed with a series of personal anecdotes.

It's Hus's humble brand of storytelling that makes him a clear fit to bear Connors's torch as Canada's troubadour, as the legend himself famously suggested he should. You can hear it in Hus's twanging guitar strings and smooth Western voice—the warmth of sure-fire Canadian authenticity.

Tim Hus is a born storyteller who feels an intense connection to the people and places he encounters across our nation. Still, he hesitates to call his own music patriotic, agreeing that it is meant less for Canada and more for Canada's

people.

"I would essentially call my music folk in the truest sense of the word, in that these are actually the sounds of the common people, taken from the places I travel and the people I meet." Hus explains that most of his songs are inspired at the grassroots level by his interactions with truckers, labourers, and industry men, making his music genuine and relatable.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is that everyone has a different favourite song of mine. The oil patch guys like my oil patch songs and the grain farmers like my farming songs."

Uncontrived and authentic, Hus's music straddles the lines between folk, country, and cowboy songs. But while his hooks and melodies make for catchy casual listening, note the local touchstones, pertinent details, and touches of wit and humour that make his music so unique. Songs such as *Madawaska River* and *Halifax Blues* from 2013's *Western Star* call Canadian towns out by name, while *Master Caster* and *Hardcore Apple Picker* transport

the listener right into the lives of rural Canadians.

While Hus will be the first to admit that, in a country so occupied by American culture, songs about Saskatoon and Hamilton are unlikely to top the charts, he is utterly uninterested in writing about Texas or California.

"I made up my mind right from the beginning that this is where I'm from, this is where I tour, this is where I make my living, and these are the people I'm singing for. I always knew that it was going to be Canadian songs and stories because that only made sense to me."

Hus is part of a small but talented collection of contemporary Canadian artists, such as Stan Rogers, James Keelaghan, and Corb Lund who join the likes of Stompin' Tom as everyman troubadours singing songs about their country. Hus himself says that the feel of his songs has best been described to him as akin to the feeling of seeing yourself in the newspaper.

"It validates people and it validates where they're from. Prince George and Sudbury are actual places on a map, and these are the places where we live."

Twenty years ago, Hus was fresh out of high school and working in a B.C. logging camp—a modest beginning that would set the tune for the rest of his career. It was in the camp that Hus first learned to play guitar and write songs that were, naturally, about logging camps.

"I found right from the start that people like to hear songs about things they are familiar with. They like to hear hometown songs, so mine went over pretty well. I started to play in pubs up and down Vancouver Island and began to consider a musical career. I gave myself five years. I moved to Calgary, got a band together, and started to play all the little towns, rural saloons, and hotels."

Then one night in a seedy Manitoba bar, the phone rang—Stompin'



Stompin' Tom Connors and Tim Hus

Tom Connors was on the line. Unknown to Hus, Connors had followed his career and wanted him on his tour. It would be the start of their two years together, during which time Hus would open to crowds as large as 6,000 people.

"It was sort of like the old veteran from the Maritimes and the young guy from the West, each with their Canadian songs, playing a coast-to-coast show together," Hus recalls. "It was a great experience. Unlike with a lot of stars, when you tour with Tom, you really tour with him. It was pretty special to stay up all night drinking beer and telling stories with Stompin' Tom. It was pretty special to be his friend."

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Kaela Rowan

The former Mouth Music singer returns to the classic ballads that first stirred her imagination.

By Colin Irwin

“You search and you find your soul and you put that into the singing...”

The words of the late, great travelling singer Sheila Stewart serve as an enduring inspiration to Kaela Rowan. Stewart knew a thing or two about storytelling (as anyone who heard her tales of encounters with The Queen and The Pope will vouch) and on an album – *The Fruited Thorn* – that includes classic balladry like *Now Westlin Winds*, *Lord Gregory*, *As I Roved Out*, *Mary & The Gallant Soldier* and *The Bonny Woods Of Hatton*, the evocation of Sheila Stewart’s name isn’t misplaced.

Brought up in the beautiful surrounds of Glenfinnan near Fort William in the Scottish Highlands – an environment drenched in “lochs, mountains and good music” – Kaela has pursued a circuitous route before landing back at the roots of her own musical path with *The Fruited Thorn*.

She fondly recalls the sessions at the Glenfinnan House Hotel run by the McFarlane family

and the little band she put together there with Angus Grant and Ian McFarlane, along with regular trips out, too, to sessions on the isle of Eigg. These were her early forays into performance and, with a good grounding in Gaelic song, you imagine there could have been no purer background in traditional music.

You’d be wrong. Her mother’s record collection was a heavy influence – “everything from Pink Floyd to Carmina Burana to The Clash...though, come to think of it, The Clash was probably me...” And then there was her brother – a committed Highland punk – not to mention all the Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Joy Division, Talking Heads, Thin Lizzy, The Damned, Banshees, Cult and JJ Cale records you could shake a stick at – so it’s no wonder the path from those early days was strewn with so many diversions.

In her twenties, she moved to Edinburgh, where she received an unexpected phone call from James Mackintosh, percussionist with Mouth Music. It was a fateful call which resulted in a) Kaela becoming lead singer with Mouth Music and b) eventually marrying him.

“Originally it was just for a few gigs to help them out. I had four days to learn the set and come down to London to appear with them on a TV thing, *The Late Show*. What they didn’t tell me was that it was going out live so that really shocked me.”

A baptism of fire, but one in which she flour-

ished, exposing her to a range of styles and influences she hadn’t previously encountered, opening her ears to new sounds from different parts of the world with appearances at WOMAD and other festivals.

“It was a huge catapult for me into the music world, seeing all these incredible bands and learning so much. Yet it also felt very natural. Mouth Music was a very accomplished band in terms of musicianship. Martin Swan was very into counting bars, which was a bit of a challenge for me but in terms of the different styles and all these different inspirations from all over the world it felt very natural and I loved it. There are so many connections between the music I’d grown up and roots music from around the world in terms of rhythm and scale and I took it in my stride. Then again you’re probably more blasé in your twenties. I’m not sure I’d take it in my stride the same way now.”

After five years and four albums with Mouth Music she decided the poppier direction in which they were moving wasn’t for her (“a shame – it was a great band that lost its way”) and started going out under her own steam, playing her own songs, albeit with the able assistance of Mr Mackintosh, who’d acquired an array of new musical toys. Together they explored different facets of house and electronica; all of which shaped her dreamy, trance-like first solo album *Menagerie* in 2014.

It helped cement her reputation both as a

free-thinker and gloriously sensitive singer, resulting in appearances and recordings with many of the great and the good of British folk music, including Eliza Carthy, Mike McGoldrick, Karen Mattheson and the Bevvie Sisters.

Along the way and against the odds she has become a favourite at the Jodhpur Riff Festival in Rajasthan, making her debut there in 2012 playing at sunrise on top of an ancient building overlooking the city of Jodhpur looking at the audience asleep on mattresses. She and James have subsequently played at the festival every year since.

"An amazing festival. We developed this set with Gaelic songs gradually luring people out of their sleep into dreams and gradually waking them up and ending up step dancing on stage when the sun was up. We played with these incredible Rajasthan musicians as well. There was not a word of common language between us, but there were these five desert musicians with beautiful flowing robes and it felt incredible."

Last year, in time to play on and tour their seventh album *The Untied Knot*, she got the chance to join James in the trailblazing Scottish band Shooglenifty.

"I was worried about joining Shooglenifty. It was a hell of a departure for them to have a

female vocalist and I was concerned what their fans would think. But it's all been good. The reaction has been great and it's amazing being part of it and seeing how these trance-like rhythms take people over. As somebody once said about them, resistance is futile once they get into that groove. I was worried the singing might break that spell but I've had no negative responses at all, even from died-in-the-wool Shooglenifty fans."

Now – with her own little band featuring Mackintosh and Ewan McPherson – things have come full circle with *The Fruited Thorn* and she freely admits the album feels like "coming home" and is at a loss to explain why she hasn't done it before.

"I'm doing things back to front! It was my brother who said 'why don't you record the songs you sang when you were young? When you're young you think you're so cool and run away from your roots. And back then in the '80s there was no easy way of recording, not like it is now."

The material on the album is itself reflective of her musical roots. As *I Walked Out* was a song she sang with her first band Pennycroft. *Now Westlin Winds* is a favourite of one of the singers who influenced her most, Dick Gaughan; *If I Was A Blackbird* was gleaned

from the singing of the late Andy M. Stewart with Silly Wizard, a band she saw a lot of in her youth; and *Lord Gregory* was from another of her favourite singers, Boy Of The Lough, Cathal McConnell.

A stellar case of musicians join her on *The Fruited Thorn*, including pipers Jarlath Henderson and Griogar Labhruidh, fiddler John McCusker and Patsy Reid, pianist Dave Milligan and double bassist Ewen Vernal. And one of the Rajasthani singers met in Jodhpur, Dayam Khan Manganiyar joins her on *The Fruited Thorn*, singing on two tracks, *Eilean Fhianain* and *Grioghal Cridhe*. "I'd never heard a voice as powerful when he opened his mouth. It was like a 500cc motor cycle starting up."

And all the while, the indomitable spirit of Sheila Stewart remains close to her heart.

"Where we lived we'd always see the travellers at the side of the road and I was so intrigued by them and what went on in their lives. The singing of Sheila Stewart is pure grit. It's blood, sweat and tears – it goes straight to your heart. Women with voices like gravel – it's all about the soul. What matters most in a singer is honesty. That's what makes a good storyteller. And this album is a homage to all the amazing singers who helped awaken the young singer in me."

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Alligator Records

Bruce Iglauer

Bruce Iglauer reflects on his 45 years of recording key contemporary blues artists.

By J. Poet

When Bruce Iglauer saw Hound Dog Taylor & The House Rockers in a blues club on Chicago's South Side, he wanted to get their music to a wider audience, no matter what it cost him.

"They weren't 'cry in your beer' blues," Iglauer says. "They were a happy, wildly raucous boogie band that could keep everyone dancing, then mix it up with some serious slow blues. I went to Bob Koester (Iglauer's boss at Delmark Records) and begged him to come and listen. When he declined, I started a record label to record my favourite band. Forty-five years later, I'm still recording my favourite bands, but without the mentoring and inspiration of Bob Koester, there would be no Alligator Records."

The label Iglauer started, to record Taylor in 1970, just celebrated its 45th year in business,

but Alligator's mainstream recognition didn't come easy.

"Like every underfinanced, understaffed indie label, we've battled for every success, and in these days of the shrinking record business, we're still battling. We want to keep finding unknown artists and create an audience for them. We want to keep our marketing current by revising our distribution, audio formats, and advertising, but we have no rich backer. We have to earn enough to pay our bills, so I worry about money constantly. We also worry that if streaming becomes the main way people hear music, there won't be enough money to make it possible to create new recordings."

Iglauer discovered the blues when he was in high school. "I was a folkie. It seemed less slick and manufactured than rock'n'roll. When I saw Mississippi Fred McDowell perform, he made commercial folk music sound as plastic as rock'n'roll had seemed. The music was honest, raw and direct."

During his years at Lawrence University in Appleton, WN, he used the college concert committee to bring the blues to Lawrence. "I told them I'd guarantee a Luther Allison show

with my own money and did three weeks of intense promotion. We sold out the campus theatre and had 100 people waiting in the lobby. Luther was thrilling, and it was a huge personal triumph.

"I'd read that Bob [Koester] would take blues fans out to the clubs, so I started visiting him at Chicago's Jazz Record Mart. He was charismatic, fast-talking and self-confident. He offered me a part-time job as Delmark's shipping clerk." Delmark was the pioneering independent blues and jazz label Koester helmed. He also ran the Jazz Record Mart, the world's largest jazz and blues record store. It closed this past February, after 53 years in business.

Iglauer accompanied Koester to every Delmark recording, mixing and editing session. "My first session was Junior Wells's *Southside Blues Jam*. I thought I'd moved from Wisconsin to Heaven." He attended sessions by Roosevelt Sykes, Mighty Joe Young, Robert Lockwood Jr., and Otis Rush, absorbing what he could. "Bob was a laissez-faire producer. He created an atmosphere where musicians could create and be shown respect."

Hound Dog Taylor & The House Rockers was

a hit, selling about 9,000 albums the first year. Iglauer got the album played on progressive FM radio by visiting stations in person. He also landed reviews in the rock press.

"I used a \$2,500 inheritance to start the company. I lived in a one-room apartment, that was also label headquarters, sleeping on the floor. My closet was the warehouse. I had no employees and no dependents. Koester kept me on at Delmark, until I got so many Alligator calls, he told me I'd have to make a choice—my label or his."

The profit margin was slim, but each album financed the next. In 1978, Albert Collins's debut album, *Ice Pickin'*, put them on a solid financial footing. "He became the best-selling artist on the label for many years. He was also a sweet, modest, and very funny guy, with a dry sense of humour."

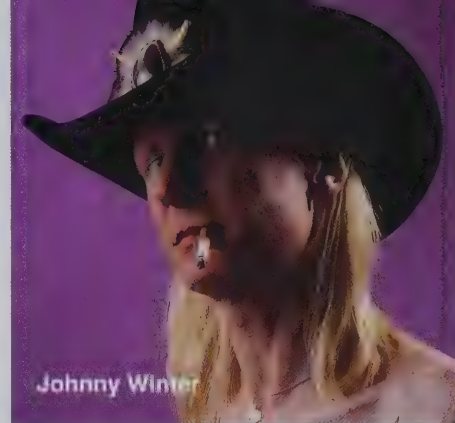
In 1984, Johnny Winter gave Alligator credibility in the mainstream pop/rock world. The media liked the story of Winter signing with a small label to make real blues records. Winter's debut, *Guitar Slinger*, made it onto the Billboard Top 200, the first Alligator album to do so. The next year, Collins asked Iglauer about recording a jam session with his friends Johnny Copeland and (the still unknown) Robert Cray. The resulting album, *Showdown!*, won a Best

Blues Album Grammy and became another bestseller for the label.

Since then, Alligator has introduced Kenny Neal, Shemekia Copeland, Little Charlie & The Nightcats, and Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials and gave new artistic freedom to folks such as Charlie Musselwhite, Elvin Bishop, Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown, and Marcia Ball.

"I'm constantly seeing artists live, listening to demos and looking at YouTube videos. Fans and friends tell me about artists they think I'd like. I take pride in the artists that we've introduced over the years—Son Seals, Lonnie Brooks, Corey Harris, Selwyn Birchwood, Jarekus Singleton, and Toronzo Cannon. All of them were gigging locally or regionally, but Alligator moved them into the spotlight. I look for artists with one foot in the tradition and one in the present and future. I encourage them to make contemporary statements, inspired by the tradition, but not repeating it."

To celebrate the label's 45th Anniversary Collection, Iglauer released a two-disc sampler: 37 tracks by the label's brightest stars including Albert Collins, Johnny Winter, Mavis Staples, Luther Allison, Hound Dog Taylor and 32 others. He assembled the album with the help of the label's core staff, the folks who help make Alligator a success.



"No important decision is made without consulting the people who work with me. The label is always presented as 'Bruce and some anonymous people,' but the staff has an amazing work ethic and great ears. They've worked behind the scenes for decades, for what we can afford to pay."

While Alligator's history is impressive, it's the future of the blues that concerns Iglauer.

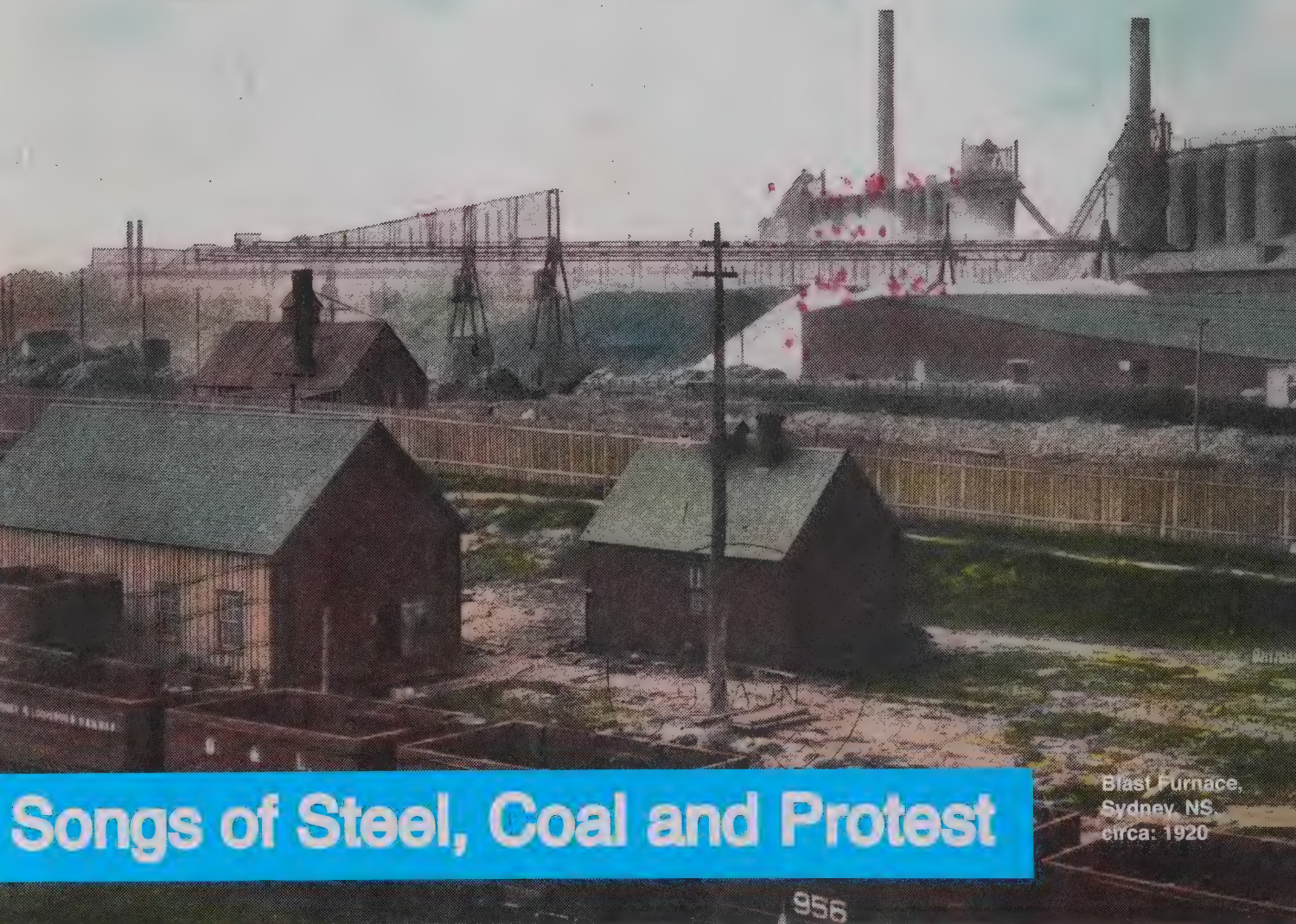
"I want the future of the blues and the future of Alligator to be the same, but I do worry that, in case I'm not immortal, Alligator may someday cease to be a label that puts out new music. After I'm gone, who will be there to champion the blues and make blues and blues-inspired recordings, in whatever format people will be listening to?"

A large graphic for "ckua radionetwork". The logo features a large, stylized microphone with the text "ckua" in white and "radionetwork" in yellow. The background is a dark, grainy image of a radio studio with people working at desks. Overlaid on the right side is a circular graphic with yellow lines, resembling a globe or a complex network diagram.

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Songs of Steel, Coal and Protest

Blast Furnace,
Sydney, NS,
circa: 1920

The voices of Cape Breton's past coal mining communities resurface on a rare new disc. By Sandy MacDonald

Sydney in the mid-1920s was ready to blow. Labour tensions were rife in the hardscrabble Cape Breton town that had been transformed just 20 years earlier when American industrialist Henry Whitney opened a steel manufacturing mill, launching the community into the modern industrial age.

Fed by iron ore and limestone from Newfoundland and coal from the 16 collieries on the island, the steel plant in Sydney (and a sister mill in Sydney Mines) provided hundreds of jobs for the local workforce.

But by 1920, Whitney had sold out and made himself a huge fortune. New owners bought in

just as the post-war steel market bottomed out and the recession struck. There was no money for capitalization, wages plummeted and layoffs were inevitable.

What lay ahead was a very confrontational and violent period of labour unrest in Cape Breton—there were 58 strikes in the Sydney coalfields between 1920-25.

Many steel workers and coal miners took to writing poetry and songs to express their frustrations. Scores of these “song-poems” were published in local newspapers and journals, including the popular *Maritime Labour Herald*.

Now, thanks to the diligent research work of Dr. Richard MacKinnon at Cape Breton University (CBU), those long-dead voices of protest are coming back to life. MacKinnon found 150 song-poems through the Beaton Institute archives at CBU.

“These kinds of songs gave you a real sense of what people were experiencing, what their thoughts were about their workplace, and what was going on in their communities,” says

MacKinnon.

After writing a couple of scholarly papers on the collection, a light bulb went on for MacKinnon. Why not re-animate these songs, and record them with contemporary Cape Breton singers.

“Cape Breton has an abundance of great musicians—so why don’t I farm out some of these songs?”

Many of the song-poems had no accompanying music published with them, so the task was to recreate music to fit the songs. That’s where the contemporary musicians picked up the project.

MacKinnon, through the Centre for Cape Breton Studies at CBU, recently released volume two of *Cape Breton Island: Songs of Steel, Coal and Protest*. (The first volume, released in 2012, focused more on the coal mining industry in Cape Breton and life in the industrial communities.)

Shifting the focus to the steel plant, MacKinnon went digging through the archives, and

through the old newspapers, including the *Steelworker* and the *Miner*, published in the 1930s through to the '50s. Many of the songs and poems were written by former steel workers and coal miners.

John (Slim) McInnis was a former steel worker who wrote song-poems from the '40s until the late 1980s.

"He knew a lot about steel making, and his songs are full of references to the hard and dangerous work in the steel mill," says MacKinnon. "He wrote quite brilliantly about what it was like to work from the '40s through to the '80s in the steel plant."

Contemporary folk musician Jordan Muscynsyn takes on McInnis's *Steel Worker's Lament*, while roots singer Angelo Spinazolla puts an acoustic blues spin on *Trampin' Down the Highway*.

Some of these songs may have been sung on the picket lines, explains MacKinnon, including *Arise Ye Nova Scotia Slaves*, the oldest song on the project. Written in 1910 in Glace Bay by Patrick J. Lynch, the lyrics are set to the familiar melody of *The Wearing of The Green*, the indestructible Irish street ballad.

The CD presents an interesting version, combining a first verse from an archival recording sung by Bob Stewart in the 1940s, then flowing seamlessly into the present-day take on the song by renowned Cape Breton singer Nipper MacLeod, the rock-solid voice who leads the Men of the Deeps.

Volume Two also includes some contemporary Cape Breton songs, including John Campbell-john's *Down at Sydney Steel*, written around the time the mill was finally being closed in

2000. John, his father, and several relatives had worked in the steel plant before it was finally mothballed, after a century of boom and bust.

The project reflects the diversity of musical talent in Cape Breton—from piano-driven ballads, boho jazz, and warm acoustic folk to searing electric blues, Springsteen-like pop, and even Gaelic communal singing over an industrial factory rhythm.

MacKinnon says he tried to include songs from the female perspective. Women played a significant role in the labour movement, often accompanying men on the picket lines and labour stoppages

Daughters Awake, recorded here by Glace Bay's The Yarnells, was written in 1924 by Becky Buhay, an early feminist and labour organizer. Buhay wrote several songs, urging women to fight for women's rights and frequently published articles in the Maritime Labour Herald about the importance of women in history.

MacKinnon's daughter, Breagh, a wonderful singer who plays with the up-and-coming Cape Breton trio Port Cities, recorded *The Miner's Wife*, which was written back in 1940. She's accompanied by fiddler Colin Grant, who contributes to several tracks on the album.

Norma MacDonald, another popular singer on the East Coast, had already recorded her original *Blackhearts of the Company* for her own solo project and allowed MacKinnon to include it on the Protest album.

MacKinnon himself contributes *The Voice of the Worker*, sounding like early Tom Waits. The original song-poem was published in 1923 by Joe Wallace in the Maritime Labour Herald.



Dr. Richard MacKinnon

"When I read the lyrics they sounded kinda Tom Waits-ish to me." He recorded a stripped-down version himself. But when his daughter Breagh heard it, she overlaid her own piano track and suggested standup bassist Red Mike MacDonald, then added some jazzy drums and electric guitar.

MacKinnon grew up in New Waterford, once a bustling coal-mining town. He played in rock bands growing up, touring around the Maritimes, eventually trading the rock'n'roll dream for a PhD in folklore studies with a focus on music.

MacKinnon says the song-poems are still relevant today, almost a century after many of them were written.

Cape Breton has had large-scale coal mining since the 1820s and the steel mill since the turn of the last century. Even though the steel plant is gone and the mines are no more, the rocky legacy of foreign-owned heavy industry and constant labour unrest has influenced how Cape Bretoners look at the world.

"Those attitudes take a long time to develop and they don't disappear once the mine or the mill closes. I think these songs have lessons that can help us as we go forward—people had to be resilient, they struggled and they survived."



Steel Strike: Dominion Steel and Coal Company, 1946.



Troops on horseback at Sydney Steel Plant, 1923



Western Centuries

Three musically diverse musicians find common ground in a politically polarized America.

By Michael Dunn

No strangers to the swell bubbling up from the underground of country music, Seattle's Western Centuries are as much a new band as they are a long-smouldering partnership finding a fuel source to catch fire in the Pacific Northwest roots scene. Rising from the bond formed among songwriters Cahalen Morrison, jam-band veteran Jim Miller, and punk rock-influenced Ethan Lawton, Western Centuries' debut, *Weight Of The World*, is helping to establish them as a band deeply knowledgeable in country music traditions, and still willing to take lyrical risks in order to advance the form from its working-class barroom roots.

Truly a band, with members taking on multi-instrumental roles to complement one another, Morrison mentions that while *Weight Of The World* began with himself, Miller, and Lawton bringing in their own songs, their

writing style has developed in the interim. "Initially, we all brought in completed songs, and worked them up together from there. These days, we're starting to collaborate more, you know, bare bones, from the ground up. Writing like this is new to all of us, but I think we're coming up with some excellent songs."

Weight of The World was produced by Band Of Horses member Bill Reynolds, and Morrison says his approach was, "to let the band be the band. We went into the studio in Nashville straight off the road, so we'd worked out a lot of arrangements, and were pretty squared away. Bill offered us fresh ears, and he had all this great vintage gear for us to use, so we really counted on him to help us find the best tones for the songs."

There's a front porch feel to *Weight Of The World*. Dance floor pocket, but toned down enough to feel at home around the campfire. The record is a fresh take on several of country music's signature sounds, from the relaxed Western Swing of *The Old You* and the barrel-house neon-beer-sign groove of *What Will They Say About Us Now?*, to the cosmic Laurel Canyon-via-Bakersfield, almost Creole twist-and-shout of *Rock Salt*. The mournful six-beat intro of *Knocking Them Down* is a deft head fake before the band kicks up into a bopping Texas

two-step, while Jim Miller recounts the life of a band on the road, and wondering what's become of his plans. Ethan Miller's raspy tenor comes to the fore on *Double Or Nothing*, an energetic bayou shuffle, buoyed by the classic call-and-response of pedal steel player Rusty Blake and special guest fiddler Rosie Newton. If their individual songwriting contributions are any indication, more collaborative sessions between Morrison, Miller, and Lawton could yield a proper country classic or two someday.

Given the band members' individual histories, there should be little surprise as to their encyclopaedic knowledge of country styles. "Well, we've really done our homework, and we all grew up in places where this music is the natural feel of the place. Jim's from Louisiana, so he's well-versed in Cajun and zydeco, and Ethan loves classic country. I grew up on more of the '80s-revivalist stuff, Dwight Yoakam, Alabama, Randy Travis. Rusty's a fountain of country music knowledge on the steel, so we've got a lot of ideas to draw from as a group," Morrison says.

"We really love what's happening out in Nashville right now, with guys like Simpson, Isbell, and Stapleton, it's great to have happening," says Morrison, "Nikki Lane, Margo Price. We love the classic country stuff, and it's great

to see and hear and, in some way, be part of a group of artists committed to making that music current to a newer generation."

This summer finds Western Centuries once more performing at Pickathon, in Happy Valley, OR. It's the band's second appearance at the festival, and Morrison's fourth time, appearing previously with Country Hammer, the band that was the genesis of Western Centuries, and as a duo with singer/songwriter Eli West. The exceedingly hip lineup is particularly stacked this year, featuring Jeff Tweedy and Yo La Tengo, and including a very hip contingent of well-hyped Canadian acts, including Kacy & Clayton, Black Mountain, Lindi Ortega, and Mac DeMarco.

Morrison's travels brought him to Seattle six years ago, from his youth in New Mexico, through his time "trying to figure things out" in Colorado. He's no stranger to the vastness of geographical and cultural differences in his country. "You know, New Mexico is just so unique culturally. You have this confluence of Native American, Mexican, and western cultures. The art, the music, the food that springs from that is really unique to the rest of the southwest. Then making my way to Seattle, it's a completely different kind of place. It's a hub, you know? So you have all these little scenes, a lot of indie and pop clubs, and Washington has historically produced a lot of really cool country music."

Having spent most of his adult life travelling America, Morrison admits his country finds itself at a strange fork in the road. "It's fucking terrifying, to be honest," he intimates. "At first, this Trump for President thing, it was funny, a real big joke, but now, it's horrifying and scary. He's bringing out the absolute worst in people, and that's not my America, that's not the country I believe in. You know, I've got a lot of friends who believe in different things, and we all know that there are problems that need solutions. I just can't believe this is the way. There aren't any easy answers, but there are ways to solve problems just by using some common sense."

Morrison is quick to note that playing music has led him to find the best in people. "I've just met so many great people doing this, and I feel like I've made a real connection with people just through getting together for the sake of hearing and playing some music together. Somehow, some people end up on a soapbox preaching hate, and fear, and division. It really is embarrassing. That's not my America."



Western Centuries – Cahalen Morrison center

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Kaia Kater

Her pivotal new disc probes her identity as a young, Canadian, banjo-playing black woman.
By Glen Herbert

“It was a very conscious album,” says Kaia Kater of her latest release, *Nine Pin*. “It was, I think, more representational of my last two years there where I felt I grew up a lot. I was forced to deal with my early 20s, and impending adulthood. The Black Lives Matter movement also arose during my last years of college, and I think I got to a place where I felt I could more comfortably express my emotions. So I did a lot more songwriting. And it feels to me like there is more of a concrete piece of myself in the

songs and in the way the songs are portrayed.”

Fred Rogers—the Mr. Rogers of the neighbourhood—said that, “each of us, has something that no one else has—or ever will have—something inside that is unique to all time.” He was right, of course, though that’s perhaps true for Kaia Kater in ways that it may not be for the rest of us. Her father is Caribbean, her mother Quebecois, and she grew up in Wakefield, on the border of Quebec and Ontario. Her mother, Tamara Kater, provided an introduction to old-time music—she was director of the Ottawa folk festival before becoming director of the Winnipeg folk festival—though also gave Kaia a Fugees record, among other things.

When her mother took the position in Winnipeg, Mitch Podolak—founder of the Winnipeg Folk Festival and father of the Dhuk’s Leonard Podolak—gave Kaia her first clawhammer banjo lesson. “He saw me and I had this really crappy banjo in the house, one that someone

had given me. And he just sat me down and gave me a lesson. And I was like, ‘ahh, not that interested in the banjo!’”

Undaunted, he gave her her second lesson, too. “He saw me six months later,” she says, “and I guiltily admitted that I hadn’t practiced. He sat me down again and does the whole lesson again, for like an hour. And after that he really encouraged my mom to send me to Swannanoa.”

So she went to the Swannanoa Gathering, near Asheville in the heart of North Carolina’s beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, and after high school, having won a Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival Scholarship, she spent four years at Davis and Elkins College in West Virginia studying old-time music.

“For me it was a mix of total unabashed obsession,” she says “Playing, techniques, and meeting other people my age that I could nerd out with. You know, I didn’t tell anybody that I

played the banjo for many years,” including her friends, “because I was very shy about it. And for self protection.”

“We live in a country where there is an old-time community, but it’s very hidden. You have to go find it.” West Virginia, even aside from a college program devoted to the folk music of the region, is an entirely different can of beans. “I went down there to get schooled, basically, and was forced to get better quickly.

“I think the goal with *Sorrow Bound*,” her first full-length album, released in 2015, “was to represent what I was learning in West Virginia. It was very quick and dirty and, you know, just showcasing what I’d learned for my Canadian community. It was like, ‘Wow, I’m learning all this stuff, but I need to put it somewhere.’”

“But then there was also the other side of that. West Virginia is a very Republican state. They’ve gone through a lot of trauma with industry, and brain drain, and people leaving the state at a very rapid pace. The population is getting older ... and then the population is 98% white, so you have a lot of homogeneity and, because of that, a lot of racism” which was more overt, and expressed perhaps more candidly, than anything she had experienced in Canada. “When I went to the States it was a whole new experience, because things would just feel so much more on edge there. And it feels like, in a split second, things could go very wrong.”

She recalls an example from last September, at the time of her 22nd birthday. “There’s a national park that’s pretty close to where I was living, and I said, why don’t we all go to a swimming hole there, because I knew of one. And they’re like, ‘OK.’ So we got some groceries and we all piled in a car and we drove there. And when we got into the parking lot we realized there was a bunch of skinheads there. We’re in the middle of a national park, so nobody was around except them. And basically, the driver of the car just sort of pulled into a spot that was very inconspicuous—most of us in the car were either black or mixed—and we just stayed there in the car and waited for them to leave. It took about 45 minutes for them to leave. They never noticed us, but it was just sort of, you know, sitting there with that fear.”

In a sense, that experience brought a lifetime of experience into high relief. “Growing up with parents in an inter-racial couple, and then being a child of that, and getting a lot of ignorance from both sides ... it was sort of an everyday thing for me. My dad was like, ‘you’re always going to have to deal with this.’ When I was a kid, he didn’t shelter me from any of that.”

The result was, indirectly, *Rising Down*, a chilling, central track on *Nine Pin*. The song that began as a commission by Davis and Elkins College as a collaboration between her and an African-American tap dancer named Katherine Maner, and the only black faculty of the school, a modern and black African dance teacher named Laurie Goux. “So we were the two black students and one black teacher in the arts, and they basically threw us in a basement studio every Wednesday night and just asked us to come up with a piece about the black experience.”

“It’s hard to even articulate the pain you’re feeling,” says Kater, “much less make a whole piece about it. ... I sort of shied away from it pretty intensely.” Working with Maner and Goux, *Rising Down* became a dance piece, which they were invited to present at the opening of the 30th Black Theatre Network Conference, Black Thoughts: Future Forward, at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago on Aug. 7.

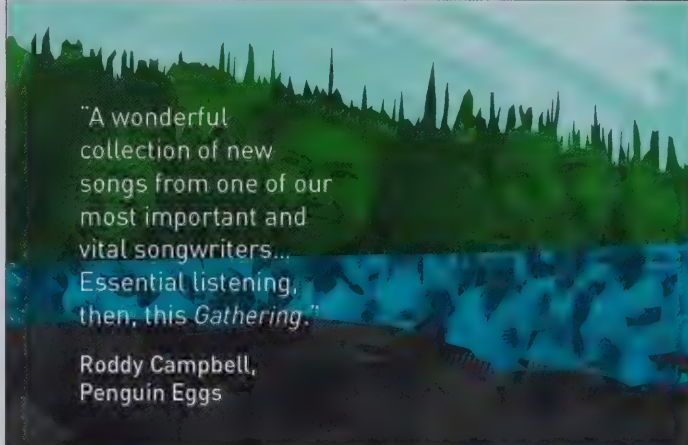
More people will hear her, thanks to the strength of this album. Which is fitting, given that she’s got a lot to say, and her voice is as unique and compelling as the perspective she brings. Certainly, there’s no one in the world quite like her, underscored by her use of old-time forms to speak to who we are, right now.

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Nathan Tinkham



Wilf Carter and the
Midnight Ramblers at
Expo '67

A one-man musical pays tribute to the life and times of Wilf Carter – the iconic, yodelling, Canadian cowboy. By Bruce Mason

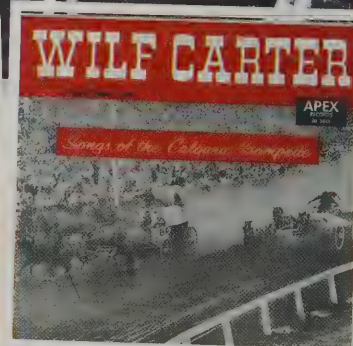
Wilf Carter was one of our biggest, brightest stars and best stories, commonly acknowledged as the father of Canadian country music and internationally known and loved as “Montana Slim”. But recognition of his legendary, prolific, 60-year career – which included a profound influence on popular culture from hundreds of original songs and dozens of albums, as well as innumerable concerts – is fading and in danger of being forgotten.

Hopefully that will change with Nathan Tinkham’s *The Yodelling Cowboy: A Tribute to Wilf Carter*. Years in the making, the one-man show unearths a true national treasure, by not only eerily channelling the music but also digging into and re-igniting the life and times of a figure whose work deserves renewed prominence in Canada’s songbook and in the repertoire of its artists.

It’s creation – with Wilf’s blessing – began by accompanying him at the 1989 Calgary Folk Festival and subsequently producing a CBC Radio documentary. The project was sustained through myriad across-the-table conversations over sandwiches and champagne, informed by old-fashioned friendship and correspondence. Inspiration came on the same horse trails and canyons where Wilf perfected his trademark yodel and began to realize his Maritime boyhood dream of being a cowboy singer.

“I was hired to entertain on the 70th anniversary of the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies, one of Wilf’s former jobs, and a tribute show occurred to me on the Pulsatilla Pass in Banff,” Tinkham recalls. “He’s our Jimmy Rodgers, our Carter Family, their contemporary and a major star.

“From the glimmer of a dream as a child, until his death in 1996, he invented and defined the genre and world-wide phenomena of the cow-



boy singer, inspiring Gene Autry, Johnny Cash, Marty Robbins, Merle Haggard, and countless others. Remaining true to his fans and his ideals, in his quiet, unassuming, and grateful way, he was one of the most influential singers and songwriters in country music history,” adds Tinkham, whose own musical adventures and contributions include 15-plus years with Ian Tyson bands, Great Western Orchestra (with Cindy Church and David Wilkie), Quartette (with Church, Sylvia Tyson, Caitlin Hanford, and Gwen Swick), and the Yukon-based Undertakin’ Daddies.

Carter’s larger-than-life, rags-to-riches story began in the tiny fishing village of Port Hilford, NS, in 1904, one of a family of nine, a son of a strict Baptist preacher/missionary. Wilf was doing odd jobs at age eight in the orchards of nearby Annapolis Valley, later driving oxen and working as a lumberjack. Mesmerized by a poster for a travelling tent show, he was intrigued and transformed by the performance of a Swiss troupe member, billed as “The Yodelling Fool”. Carter had defied his parents and managed to come up with the 25-cent admission, but paid again, punished by having to stand while eating at the dinner table for weeks. He left home at 15, after an argument with his father, riding the rails, singing to fellow “tramps” in boxcars and around hobo jungle campfires, teaching himself guitar, entertaining wherever he could get exposure and experience, busking on street corners, while punching cows, breaking horses, skinning coyotes for “livin’ money,” competing on rodeo circuits, constantly composing songs from his unique, honest perspective, and developing his distinctive “echo” or “three-in-one” yodelling style.

One of the many stories from the tribute that illustrate the looming

Depression Era is of Carter sharing not only a small room but also one decent pair of pants, that necessitated waiting for their return before stepping outside. However, as hard times hit globally, Wilf's career soared, catapulting him into international stardom, unprecedented for a Canadian singer/songwriter and a stark contrast and turn of events that is virtually impossible to comprehend, or over-estimate.

He had landed a regular radio gig in Calgary but, more important, was hired by the Canadian Pacific Railway to entertain tourists who hungered for the "real" Wild West, some of them very well-heeled and well-connected. Carter turned down an offer in the burgeoning recording industry – couldn't afford to take time off work – but didn't refuse a CPR invitation to perform aboard the maiden voyage of the SS Empress.

En route to Halifax, he stopped in Montreal to cut two early compositions, the signature *My Swiss Mountain Lullaby* and *The Capture of Albert Johnson*, an account of a mad-trapper Mountie killer. By the time Carter returned to port he had a hit record – the first by a Canadian country artist – and a call from RCA Victor to continue on to New York, which also led to radio stardom.

One requirement was censor's prior approval of lyrics and when a young typist suggested he needed a more western-sounding name, such as Montana Slim, Carter replied, "Anyone'll do, long as they pay me." He later told Tinkham about the origin of what became a household moniker, in classic Carter understatement: "She didn't like my name. Mother did."

From 1935-40 Carter was one of the biggest stars on radio, with the full CBS orchestra and Lucky Strike as sponsor. His program was syndicated to some 250 stations across North America, reportedly receiving 10,000 fan letters a week. While being wine and dined by the elite, he never lost the common touch or drifted from his humble persona. Patsy Montana has said, "When you heard him on the radio, you just knew

you were getting the real thing". A man who introduced himself as "Fred Martin" showed up at the studio with a 000-45 guitar, a gift of appreciation that Wilf played throughout his career. And Ramblin' Jack Elliot recalled Woody Guthrie's opinion: "You know, that Wilf Carter could have been the greatest folksinger of them all, if he hadn't gone commercial." Jack chalked it up to envy.

A 1940 automobile accident sidelined Carter for nine years, but periodic releases from a stockpile of recordings sustained his popularity. He resumed performing with his daughters in *The Family Show With The Folks You Know*, was a frequent, most-requested guest on CBC TV's Tommy Hunter Show, and in 1991, at age 86, undertook The Last Round-up Tour. He continued to pack halls with every appearance, telling Tinkham, "Musicians who don't play some smaller places are just skipping over the money".

Nathan has recorded Carter originals such as *Calgary Roundup*, *Hobo's Song to the Mounties*, *Hang the Key on the Bunkhouse Door* and *There's a Love Knot in My Lariat* – a hit for Slim Whitman in the U.K. He's also cut songs associated with Montana Slim such as *Big Rock Candy Mountain*, *Strawberry Roan*, *This Old House*, Jimmie Rodgers's *Waiting for A Train*, and Jimmie Davis's *You Are My Sunshine*.

But *The Yodelling Cowboy: A Tribute to Wilf Carter* breathes new life into an essential Canadian story, a breath of fresh air with fascinating anecdotes and unforgettable language culled from personal conversations with Montana Slim himself. Carter's reaction to the ongoing work: "I can't believe anyone would go to all this trouble over me". However, after a performance of the tribute at the Vancouver Island Music Fest, fans – who find little in contemporary music that resonates, especially "new country" – in typical and sometimes tearful Wilf Carter fashion, lined up to say, "Thank You, so much!"



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Feb 25

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James Keelaghan



The Once



The Outside Track

An ever-changing lineup has kept these Celts on their toes and in need of a toaster.

By Tim Readman

The outside track is the outer, longer way around a racecourse or running track and so, by definition, a more difficult route to take. According to fiddler Mairi Rankin, the same could be said for the band The Outside Track and their pan-Celtic, Scots, Irish, and Cape Breton musical fusion.

"It's difficult because it's hard to put a label on it, even for ourselves, when you are from all different places. Sometimes we are thought of as being not Canadian enough or not Scottish enough. We are not pretending to be a full-on Scottish or Irish or Cape Breton band, so there are some roadblocks. There's no niche for our

sound and that's really frustrating. But if you get the chance to hear us then you'll realize it's all three in one. It's like the combo meal—you are getting a deal and we can even supersize it!" she adds, laughing heartily.

Which leads us to the story of how this rather unusual mixture of people and musical origins came into being. "Well, the band started 10 years ago when the original members were at Limerick Academy of Music in Ireland. They put an album out right away and started touring. After a few months, they all scattered all over the place—Canada, Minnesota, Scotland, Ireland, England. There's been tons of crazy tours and quite a few lineup changes since."

Now there are four full-time members: Scotswomen Ailie Robertson and Fiona Black, Teresa Horgan who is Irish, and Mairi herself, who comes from one of Cape Breton's most famous musical families and joined up six years ago. So after four releases, the current one being the excellent *Light Up The Dark*, how does Ms. Rankin assess the development

of the band over the last decade?

"Listening to all the CDs, I notice the differences in sound. Some of the chording patterns are the same but the style has changed quite a bit. Ailie and Fiona were there from the get-go and then when somebody leaves and somebody else from a different region comes in, it changes the sound—so there's been continuous change."

She goes on to talk about *Light Up The Dark* and how it differs from their previous work.

"We added drums to some of the songs, and that was really interesting to work with. Also, I think we went with more upbeat songs that people can hear and like right away...rather than sad ballads that tear your heart out. It's also about us growing—10 years ago, everyone had a different idea of what they wanted and now we are all on the same page and everybody's got input. We've really learned not to get attached to certain tunes or songs, that there'll be a time and a place for them, it might be now, it might be five years, it might

be on your solo album. If it's not working, throw it away—and that takes maturity. That's really helped us come a long way. Sometimes we pull out a tune and then say, 'Oh my God, what is that?' and then realize that was one that was in the throw-away pile!"

Which leads to some wondering aloud about how the band works, with everyone living in different places. Isn't that just a way of making things even more challenging than they have to be?

"You can look at it as being difficult or as a reason to be extremely organized. You don't have the luxury of saying, 'I'll just come over tomorrow'. We have put in a lot of hard work—bringing tunes to the band, trying them out, playing them in sound check, exploring what we can do to arrange them, playing them in the show, then rearranging them. When we are on tour, it's really intense because there's no time for anything but the things you have to do. It's exactly what you should be doing, though—making sure you are several steps ahead—because the logistics of booking five people from all over the map who also work in other bands are complicated. So it's always work—but then, that's the whole point of it."

After reflecting on 10 successful years of hard work and real commitment, the focus shifts to what is next?

"We are thinking about another album. Sorting out the next guitar player is a priority because it's hard to move forward without that fifth member. Some filmed stuff for YouTube with the current lineup will get done soon. We also have tour dates coming up in Switzerland, the U.K., U.S.A.... I have to look at our website to remember it all!" she says with a laugh.

So there you have it: the story of The Outside Track taking the outside track. It's the story of dedication and hard work fuelled by a true love of traditional music and the ability to embrace all sorts of musical influences—and to never stop changing, growing and learning.

The result makes all the difficult times worthwhile, a fact that is easily made evident on listening to their recorded work and seeing their live performances. It is never the easiest route but it is a very rewarding one. Perhaps the only drawback—expressed with tongue planted firmly in cheek—is it doesn't leave much time for really letting loose on the road.

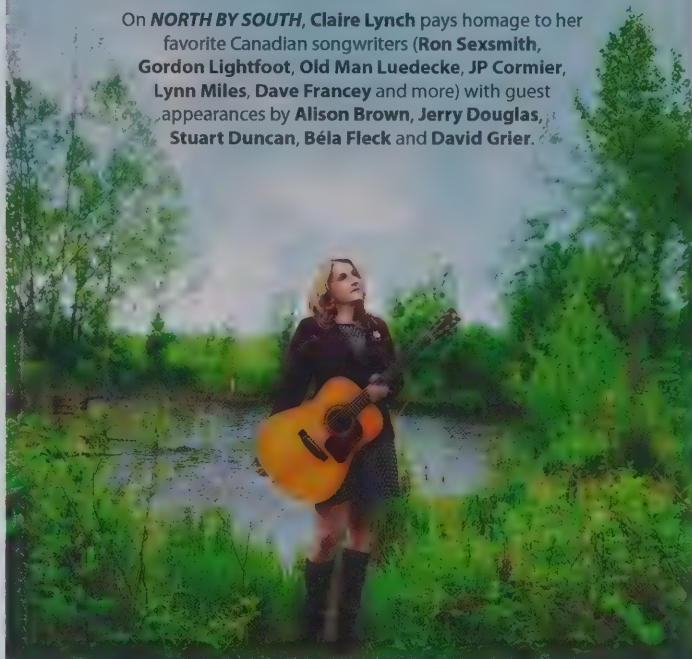
"We've been trying to make a cheese toastie with hair straighteners—that is about as wild as it gets. We'd kill for just a toaster! Meanwhile, we've been hearing rock'n'roll stories from some folks we've been on the road with. When it comes to throwing TVs into the swimming pool out of the hotel window...hmmm...we might throw the TV if we had one...or a hotel room...or a pool...or even a window!"



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A politician who listens, reflects, and responds – whether drafting a by-law or writing a song.

By Pat Langston

Sewer systems, zoning decisions, budget forecasts: you'd think grappling daily with municipal politics would strangle the creative life of any artist.

It's true that the political process can be "excruciatingly slow," says James Gordon, the veteran singer/songwriter who's served as municipal councillor in the southern Ontario city of Guelph since 2014.

And slow, bureaucratic processes are particularly challenging for someone like Gordon, whose self-propelled career has included co-founding the trendsetting Canadian folk group Tamarack in 1978 and Guelph's Hillside music festival several years later, writing enormously admired tunes such as *Frobisher Bay* and *Mining For Gold*, and releasing a raft of solo albums including his latest, *Sunny Jim*.

Yet Gordon finds municipal politics both enormously engaging and well aligned with his musical background.

"What I love about it is it's the most grass-

roots level of democracy. If you can engage someone at that level, then you've built a relationship and can bring them on into other (bigger) issues. Sometimes I think you can get more done than if you were a backbencher MPP," says Gordon, who twice ran for the NDP provincially.

As well, he says that politics involves "the same tool set as music: listening, responding, caring, reflecting."

Besides, being out and about as a politician has netted him fodder for songs including *I'm, Just An Old Farmhouse* on the new album. Based on an event in Guelph, the song lovingly recounts the history of an old farmhouse slated for demolition by developers. The births, the deaths, the laughter of farmhands that happened within the home's four walls: a little bit of the town's history will be wiped clean when the old place goes. It's a touching song about the consequential nature of things that, unless you know their back story, can seem inconsequential and dispensable.

Gordon – who's 61, a native of the Guelph area, and has written music for dance, film, and CBC Radio – has long been an activist in both his personal and artistic lives. From 2013 to 2015, for example, he toured his one-man show *Stephen Harper: The Musical* ("It worked. You're welcome," is the tag line that now accompanies mention of the show).

Activism inspires another tune on the album, *Change Train*. The lyrics and arrangement, like the title itself, are enormously positive: "Cracks in the system startin' to show. Come on can't you feel it?" he sings. "Shoot for the stars, why aim low?"

The song is deliberately reminiscent of sentiments from the 1960s, he says. "*What Change Train* is trying to echo is, 'There's a job to do and if we work together we can do it'."

Gordon, whose activism is geared to social justice and the environment, sees signs of positive change as this troubled decade wears on. "When things get bleak, you either turn off or engage with the process. There was a whole generation that turned off but I'm noticing a new one getting more engaged."

Alongside its outward gaze, the new album has a self-reflective streak. Gordon says his very public work, especially as a councillor, has made him want to take a step back and look at himself.

That look in the mirror has yielded, among other songs, the title track *Sunny Jim*. In it, the singer tells the perpetually smiling, driven Jim that he can let his dark side show sometimes and that saving the planet can wait until the weekend is over. The song is about granting himself permission to be himself but it's also about others, says Gordon. "It was written after hearing lots of people say, 'Gee, am I spend-

ing too much time trying to make everybody happy, and is that really me? Can I be more honest with myself if that's not how I'm really feeling?" Those of us in show business sometimes have that pressure – you've got to be on all the time."

The album's cover underscores the point. It's a painting of Gordon by Greg Denton and shows a man with tousled grey hair, shadows on one side of his face, and what seems the ghost of a smile but a smile that vanishes when you look more closely. The centrefold of the liner notes is a photo of the same painting but with a smiling, real-life Gordon next to it: it's at once funny and not.

Elsewhere on the album, Gordon takes us canoeing (twice), accompanies us down "desperate boulevards" and past a Discount Auto Parts store, and asks if our busy lives mean we're missing out on what's most important: life itself.

Gordon, who's accompanied on this album by his sons Evan and Geordie Gordon, also transports us to Vietnam in the lovely song *Halong Bay*. If you've never seen photos of the bay's startling emerald waters and rocky shores, a Google search will show you why it's a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Gordon's song is about a man's encounter

with a seafaring woman as gorgeous and mysterious as the bay where they meet, a woman who opens up to him about her inner life. The idea for it came from his tour of Vietnam and Cambodia a decade ago, and from his insight that when we're travelling and in an enclosed space like a ship or a train we're inclined to share intimate stories with strangers. It's an especially well-crafted song with a sense of loneliness made even more resonant by its ending: a verse from the Carter Family's *I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes*.

Gordon concludes the new album with the 1993 song *Frobisher Bay*. A stark, imagined account by a crew member aboard a whaling vessel that's become trapped in Arctic winter ice, it's been recorded by more than 100 artists including Tamarack but, until now, never by Gordon alone.

He sings it a cappella in the Guelph Youth Music Centre, the acoustics of the space rendering the song as haunting as the Cowboy Junkies' version of another Gordon tune about dangerous jobs – *Mining for Gold*.

He wrote *Frobisher Bay* after Jane Siberry phoned to ask if he had a song to contribute to a fundraiser for preserving the world's oceans that was being organized by Peter Gabriel. With Gabriel and Siberry involved, Gordon



immediately said yes, he had a song. Then, of course, he had to actually write one.

"It's probably the only song I've written that gets sung in every show because someone always asks for it," he says. "Do Canadians really like death and freezing all that much?"

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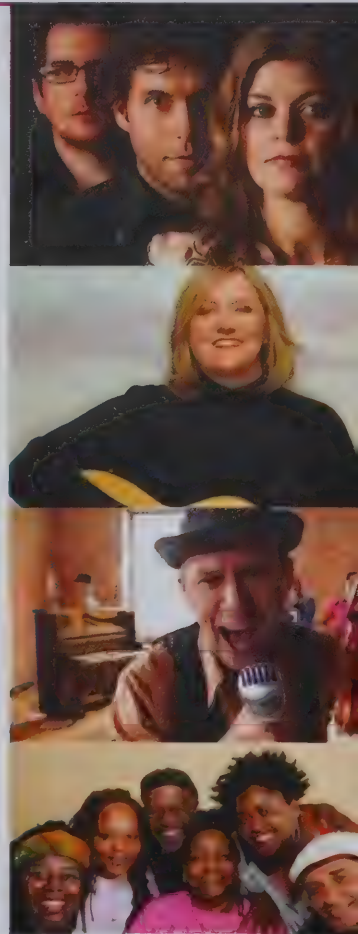
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Qristina and Quinn Bachand

Brother/sister duo's latest album is a challenging, disquieting fusion of grit and beauty.

By Colin Irwin

As Qristina and Quinn Bachand freely acknowledge, their third album together, *Little Hinges*, isn't everyone's cup of beetroot juice. There may even be some of this parish who might happily dispatch it to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean...with tin cans on.

Not this correspondent, obviously. Some of us think it's wonderful. Some of us think the intriguing sonic initiatives linked with impeccable musicianship and singing give it rare freshness and originality. Some of us think it was one of the best albums that came out of Canada—or anywhere else—last year.

"Our friends love it!" says Quinn, a young man barely out of his teens bursting with ideas and enthusiasm who, in addition to his work

with his big sister, has toured with Ashley McIsaac and now plays guitar, violin, and banjo fronting his own Gypsy jazz/swing band Brishen. "It is different," he concedes of *Little Hinges*. "When people hear something that is dynamically different and sonically different, they can be uncomfortable. Maybe it's also generational—a lot of young people appreciate it more than those used to hearing Celtic bands."

Elder sister Qristina, a sublime singer and fiddle player whose own fascinating CV also includes three months researching infectious diseases in Uganda as part of a masters degree course in Amsterdam, is equally philosophical. "Our first two albums are pretty much fiddle and guitar so when *Little Hinges* arrived some people were shocked. I don't think it's immediately digestible music. It's something that takes a bit more time to get into and get your ears around and the listener may take a few listens to get it. I'm sure some people will have put it in, heard it and shut it straight off..."

Quinn: "I grew up doing gigs at 12 with the king of the local scene (Daniel Lapp) who'd be

playing a reel or something and then suddenly go off into a crazy jazz solo. In B.C. we're not really tied to any particular tradition and we don't feel we're offending or hurting anything by changing the music. Some people thought it was amazing when Ashley McIsaac starting turning the music into rock or something while others thought it was total blasphemy and should never have happened. But we don't have that struggle. We feel free to do whatever we want."

Tom Waits was a big influence on *Little Hinges*, notably his production techniques on *Mule Variations*, prompting them to go off on some experimental tangents, involving echo chambers, bizarre sound samples (BC Ferries' loudspeaker announcements and wind chimes included), some discordant arrangements and various weird and wonderful techniques, including Quinn singing with his head in a garbage tin at one point.

"Grittiness mixed with really pristine bright sounds—seeing how sound can be manipulated" as they describe it.

Which may sound awful and probably would

be awful if they didn't have solid musical skills and a rich understanding of folk music to back it up. They are not the least defensive, apologetic about taking such liberties ("Our goal was to open the doors of the beautiful but often rigid-minded traditional music we love to various sounds and inspirations we've accumulated over the past three years.") And there's no denying the disquieting atmosphere this approach generates on dark songs such as *Hang Me, Jimmy's Fiddle*, and *Three Little Babes*.

Disturbing stuff, although they do offer a more traditional approach on the first part of the album with Qristina singing a glorious version of Si Kahn's inspirational *What You Do With What You've Got*. This—and another stand-out track, *Crooked Jack*—was gleaned from the singing of Dick Gaughan. Living in Amsterdam at the time, Qristina became completely obsessed by Gaughan and celebrated her 22nd birthday by flying to London to see him.

"I discovered him in 2011 and spent pretty much an entire year listening only to him and all his albums. And it was an amazing experience going to see him in London. It felt like meeting a superstar—I was this little fan girl ready to burst into tears. But he's such a down-to-earth guy. And he remembered meeting Quinn when they played at Edmonton Festival together."

They even played *What You Do With What You've Got* in front of its writer Si Kahn at the Folk Alliance. "We had 12 or 14 showcases stacked almost back to back so we were running around all over the place but we had half an hour off so I flipped through the programme and saw that Si Kahn was showcasing on the floor below so I ran down and introduced myself and said, 'me and my brother do one of your songs'. And he invited us to play it at the start of his own showcase. He's a really sweet guy and was very happy that we recorded it. We put in one of Quinn's tunes into it as an instrumental and it seems to work really well."

The vast range of influences they embody comes from their unusual background. Their Spanish mother Marie and French father Adrien met on a transcendental meditation gathering in Ibiza and they travelled all over Europe before settling in Victoria, B.C. Marie is from a long line of dancers, Adrien is a guitar restorer and Q and Q grew up listening to the huge range of different music encased in their parents' huge record collection, everything from jazz and western swing to old Canadian fiddle tunes.

"They started us off playing music when we were very young. We did fiddle stuff and

classical violin and it was a way of expressing ourselves. When we started our dad and mum would play with us and we did it as a family and then it became just the two of us."

Quinn, in fact, was just 11 years old when they recorded their first album together, *Relative Minors* in 2008.

The partnership is, however, problematic... it's bound to be when they live on different continents. Quinn is studying at Berklee College of Music in Boston and Qristina is doing a music degree at Limerick in Ireland, where she's been working on the tentatively titled *Linger*, a solo album of her own fiddle tunes.

"When I got to Limerick a lot of people said they thought my style was like Liz Carroll and Eileen Ivers. I did go through a big Liz Carroll/Eileen Ivers phase so I suppose that is bound to come through, although I'm trying to shed some of that and find my own style. Martin Hayes is another big hero of mine and growing up in Victoria, Daniel Lapp influenced us both a lot."

Their tours together thus have to be prepared like a military operation, as they intently study their diaries. And, when they do make it on the road together—usually in a four-piece lineup at present—it's impossible to replicate the complex layered sounds and moods of *Little Hinges*.

Quinn: "We're very happy with the album and it's exactly the way it is supposed to be, but it's impossible to reproduce—some of the tracks have three different drum parts and we'd need a 10-piece band, which isn't really do-able at the moment. I think we will record something else in a couple of years or something but we might just strip it down and do it old school."

And in case you're wondering...Quinn and Qristina are their real names.

Qristina: "Someone commented on our Facebook page that it was time we dropped the Q&Q gimmick because it was really lame and spell my name as Christina, so I had to say actually it is my real name. Our parents just liked the letter Q. It used to cause a bit of attention at school. I won't be giving my kids names beginning with Q..."





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On The Beat



Ashley MacIsaac's new album, *FDLEA*, delves into the mysterious realms of techno beats, dance samples, and fiddle tunes often made on the fly. Words by Roddy Campbell.

“Hi, how are you today?” says I. Well, how else are you going to greet Ashley MacIsaac? As it turns out, he’s fine, thank you very much.

Always an animated, humorous, and thoughtful interview, the one-time folk *enfant terrible* has clearly shaken the demons that almost cost him his career. He is 41 now, not exactly the precocious kid who recorded a double platinum-selling album that consisted largely of fiddle tunes written or collected around Cape Breton. But his masterful, mischievous, frantic fiddling, which stirred such elite company as The Chieftains and Paul Simon, remains firmly intact, truly.

Cue MacIsaac’s enthralling new album, *FDLEJ*—his first in five years—with its brazen techno beats, assorted samples, scraps of nitrous oxide vocals, a splatter of rap, various rock and dance paraphernalia, and exquisite border pipes all wrapped up in traditional and original fiddle tunes. Certainly, it’s a challenging recording but one that includes similar ingenious elements as the late Martyn Bennett’s groundbreaking *Grit*.

Dance music, of course, has held an infatuation for MacIsaac since a stint in New York in 1992 working on the folk opera *Woyzeck* for JoAnne Akalatis, wife of Philip Glass. New York’s discos made the teenager’s head swim.

“I’m listening to this music that has 120 beats a minute with a big bass drum and it immediately sounded to me like my foot,” he told me in 1996. “I’d be sitting in a club with my six-inch platforms, and tartan bell-bottoms and a big black fedora, and I’m going, ‘Dee diddle dum de di, de diddledum de durumdum’. Saying, ‘That could work!’ That was, like, the real first musical thing that came as being a way to cross over.”

While he frequently played a blistering live version of the Bee Gees’ disco anthem *Stayin’ Alive*, and briefly explored the use of a DJ on *Helter’s Celtic* (1999), with *FDLEJ* he finally explores dance in all its mashed up techno glory.

“It was time,” says MacIsaac, in the wake of his blistering set at Vancouver Island Musicfest in July. “I didn’t know if I could make any really young-sounding albums at 41. I’m not David Bowie. I’m a traditional artist. I’ll continue to make traditional music while I’m still alive and can only sit down and not stomp around like a maniac playing *Devil In The Kitchen*.

“So this was an opportunity. I looked for a DJ and I found [Jay Andrews]. When I called him up, I said, ‘What are you doing?’ And he said, ‘I’m playing [drums] in a pipe band.’ And I said, ‘That’s perfect, you understand traditional music, but clearly you’re a DJ, so let’s do this.’ The fact that I met Jay is the biggest reason why the album turned out the way it did.”

While Jay Andrews plays a considerable role on *FDLEJ*, *Neon Dreams*, the electronic dance quartet from Halifax, NS, also make an impressive appearance on the album’s first single, *Make It Easy*. More

startlingly, though, is the track *Masters* for the simple fact it opens with the gorgeous unadorned border pipes of Jeremy Kiddy from Dartmouth, NS. “I don’t know Jeremy really well but he has a really interesting liveliness to his piping,” says MacIsaac. And then there’s the First Nations drumming and sampled chants on *Hubert’s Story*. It’s a track partially inspired by the work of crack Ottawa DJ crew A Tribe Called Red.

Yet, despite the formidable diversity that drives MacIsaac’s new album, fiddle tunes, naturally enough, still provide its fearless backbone. And separating the traditional tunes such as *The Foggy Dew* and *The Devil In The Kitchen* from his original scores proved somewhat pivotal.

“That gets into the real making of this project. The very first music we did, we just had a couple of instruments and some drum machines. Out of that came *Phillip’s House*. Shortly after, I asked Jay to buy me some beat-makers in Halifax. I listened to 20 different beats. I call them dead tracks, basically. So I listened to all these dead tracks and picked two or three of them I knew would work. Some of them didn’t necessarily have the same amount of bars or measures that a standard tune would have so I made something up that fit. One of them is *Gold Wing*, that’s something that’s not really a full AA BB tune like you normally have—maybe instead of 16 bars, it’s a 12-bar phase. On this album and on every album, there are a couple of tracks I just come up with an idea on the fly. You go into the studio, ‘Just set me up a beat here.’ Or, ‘Just put the microphone on’, and you come up with an idea. That might be the base that someone else works on or it might be a complete track—*Foggy Dew* was one of my best.”

On a practical level, taking an extravaganza like *FDLEJ* on the road has its financial and personnel drawbacks. So it has only had a couple of live airings to date. For his performance on Vancouver Island, he brought along Jay Andrews and his electronic gadgets and reunited with acoustic guitarist Quinn Bachand. Together they played like a force of nature on, surely, one of the most thrilling gigs of the summer.

“One of my concerns when I went out onstage at Musicfest was that you have a folk audience watching great musician-ship all night, and performing with electronic music, I think that it’s not necessarily the same vibe as you get performing with five live instruments.



Jay Andrews and Ashley MacIsaac - beat it



When I'm doing a show with a live rock band it can really go tits up, but it can also be really powerful. But to have a track with rap in it, or to have a bagpipe performer and they're not in front of you, I was going, 'How is this going to fly in front of a musician/artist type audience?'

"But Jay is such a great performer. In addition to all his pushing of buttons, he also puts his body into the percussion side of his live performance. That was one of the very first things I noticed when I saw a video of him. I thought, 'OK, I like the way this guy is performing. He could pass as being manic onstage. The presentation I think is important, and I thought about that as I was making this record. I thought, 'I hope I get the chance to present this as 10 unique songs on some cool stage.' I found that between me and Jay we get a really good show—enough of our own musicianship coming out even if it is electronic tracks. And I think that's fine."

Martyn Bennett's name inevitably comes up in conversation due to the common threads that bind their albums. Bennett was born in Newfoundland but raised in Scotland by his noted folklorist mother, Margaret Bennett. A gifted piper and fiddler influenced by Britain's fledgling dance scene, the dreadlock-sporting young Bennett tragically died of cancer aged 33 in 2005. He met MacIsaac at Celtic Connections in Glasgow.

"He came up to me. I saw him dancing like a crazy guy with his dreads everywhere. I was thinking, 'This really attractive, young, cool, white-looking Jamaican kid, who is this Jamaican kid?' And it turned out he was a Newfoundlander by birth and he played music. And he played something right there on some type of CD player with earphones. I give it back to him and said, 'Give me your phone number.' Eventually I got him into Canada to tour here through my agent. We never made any music together; we might have played onstage once. But over the few years that I had conversations with him, he was progressing into really progressive stuff, like on his last record [*Grit*] that I heard posthumously. Martin is an inspiration in my mind. He was a master. What a brain."

Quite possibly the most dominant contemporary influence on Ashley MacIsaac is Philip Glass, one of America's most noted composers. He would introduce MacIsaac to the likes of Paul Simon and David Byrne, recruit him for his *Orion* album and book him for benefits at Carnegie Hall for Tibet House—the cultural and political lobby group headed by the Dalai Lama. They remain close friends. Glass describes his experimental music as 'repetitive structures' and it still resonates with MacIsaac.

"There's an actual organic osmosis being around Philip and his style of writing, in the repetitiveness, structurally copying something and filling it up. It has inspired me when I'm playing onstage, particularly with Jay.

The other night, in a tune I was wondering, 'OK, what part is happening now.' I didn't have to concern myself because I thought, 'I'm more into repeating a phrase that I like right now'.

"But more than that I see what a professional the guy he is. He lives a normal, regular life when he's home, but he also tours and is this big superstar. He goes onstage and plays his music the way any other professional does, but he seems to have the other side of it, too—the normal life, the family. I think he's found success balancing his life. I'm trying to do that.

"Obviously, I don't have children, I'm married [to violinist Andrew Stokes] and have cats and dogs, and that's enough to sort of feel normal. It's that sort of way of living that I took from him, just being around him and seeing that he's a gentleman. And on a real bizarre level, even when he's at home, he's working, which I sort of feel like I am, too. When I wake up in the morning I figure, 'I'm Ashley MacIsaac, so if you're not onstage today, you're working', because that's my job. If I want to, I could spend my day rehearsing at home, but I don't. I'm not a writer, per se, unless I need to finish a project. I say, 'I'm going to write something and I'm going to do it now', as Philip does. He sits down at 8 o'clock in the morning, gets up and goes for lunch, starts again and then at 5 o'clock he's done. So when I'm actually doing a project I think of it that way, too, just set the time out and get into it. He's very professional."

Through his relationship with Glass, MacIsaac took Maybelle Chisholm—the now 80-year-old stately queen of Cape Breton piano players—to Carnegie Hall last spring to perform for Tibet House alongside the likes of The Flaming Lips and Laurie Anderson. As unlikely a pairing as it seems, the two frequently play traditional sets together as witnessed at Celtic Colours last October. MacIsaac's both humble and humorous when appearing with Chisholm and clearly revels in her playing.

"I called Maybelle when she was 70 and said, 'I have a gig in two days that I don't have a musician for; it's strenuous, are you thinking you might be up to it?' And she said, 'Tell me what it is, dear.' And I said, 'Well, you'll have to drive from Cheticamp to Halifax and fly from Halifax to Toronto, Toronto to Vancouver, Vancouver to Fort Nelson, and from Fort Nelson you'll take a helicopter into the interior of BC where I'm playing a show. And she said, 'OK, I'll do that.' That's Maybelle, somebody who loves music. It's her life. She lives and breathes it. Who, at 80 years of age, would go to the moon for a fiddle tune. She's a lover and an exponent of our music, as deserving of the title of queen as anybody in music."

His traditional gigs with Chisholm are the complete antithesis of his current project. The differences are manifold it would appear. Well?

"I go out knowing that I am going to be playing the fiddle. Based on what the venue is, something like a cèilidh, or Carnegie Hall, or a punk club, you have a bit of an idea of what your audience is. Then, I know how to present the show and how I present myself. But the hardest of them all are the really broad town events, a Canada Day, where you're going to play to many people. At those shows I'm probably more nervous than ever because I'm going to have to please so many different types of people. Often those shows go very well because I'm probably a little more nervous and I probably put a little more on the line."

Ashley Dwayne MacIsaac was born in Creignish, Inverness County, Cape Breton Island, in 1975 and began step dancing at the age of five. Three years later he took up the fiddle. Stan Chapman from Antigonish gave him his first lessons. "He was really responsible for most of the young people who have learned to play the fiddle in Cape Breton."

Chapman's students included Ashley's cousins Natalie MacMaster and Wendy MacIsaac. Natalie's uncle, the late, renowned fiddler Buddy MacMaster, though, proved Ashley's main mentor. While MacMaster



Devil in the Kitchen

died, aged 80, in 2014, Ashley tells a wonderful story of how he and Buddy opened for The White Stripes in Glace Bay, NS, in 2007. Jack White, incidentally, is related to them both.

"I was ready with my band to play four songs. I already had Cape Breton on my side. But then Buddy came out with me and he killed it. It was awesome. After Buddy hit the last note, I said, 'Get ready for the best concert you'll ever see.' We went downstairs and we got a grin from Jack and Meg. And I asked him if he was going to hang out and he said, 'Yeah, I have a seat in the audience.' I said, 'It's gonna be a little smelly out there, Buddy.' And he said, 'Yeah, I've smelt a little bit of that before.' So he spent two hours four rows back in the audience with clouds of pot around him. It was as green as it could ever be in a theatre. They let everything go because The White Stripes were doing their tenth anniversary tour. It was probably the first time he ever heard and saw such a loud rock show. I asked him afterward what he thought about it and he said, 'Wow, they were really, really great onstage'."

Barely out of his teens, MacIsaac's Road to Damascus epiphany came in the implausible form of Zamfir—a cloying Romanian pan piper—plugging his latest K-Tel recording on television.

"I was a little bizarre as a kid, I was probably around 13 when this was on TV. I was playing the fiddle and had been practicing for a few years. At the bottom of this instrumental commercials, there was the name of tunes. I was picturing in my head having a record of that quality, that was going to be international, could be sold on television and would promote fiddle tunes. That was my crazy notion. I didn't realize that the inspiration in general was that this guy was selling instrumental music. I told myself that I could find a market, too."

MacIsaac served an apprenticeship with Ron Hynes, and would later tour with The Chieftains, but he made his recording debut in 1992 with *Close To The Floor*—a solid if somewhat timid treatment of various reels and jigs. Partially inspired by the fiddle recordings of the late Oliver Schroer, *hi™ how are you today?* followed four years later. "I had

listened to all of Oliver Schroer's records. I wanted to make something that cool. When I found that first album of his, I was about 16."

hi™ how are you today?, that masterful, impish, passionate blaze of eclectic glory, sold 200,000 copies in Canada alone. Unbelievably, the single *Sleepy Maggie*, sang in Scots Gaelic, no less, by Mary Jane Lamond, also made a hefty dent on the pop charts.

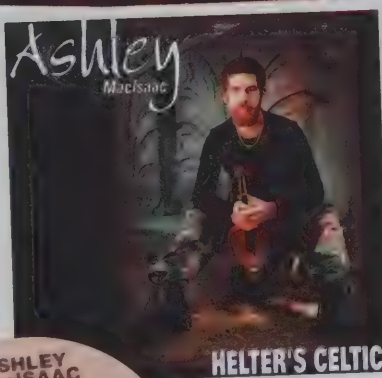
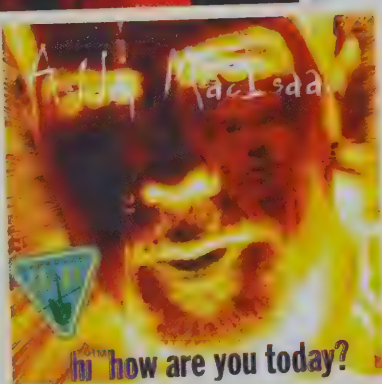
"I was in a hotel on Highway 10 in Ontario watching MuchMusic. I had a bag of pot in my hand and I was getting ready to light a joint and there was my video, No. 1. No. 2 was Madonna. It was the No. 1 the week before and I knocked it out. What a mind freak."

hi™ how are you today? earned two Juno Awards for Best Roots and Traditional Album and Best New Solo Artist. *fine®, thank you very much* (a traditional album) followed a year later and he picked up a third Juno as Best Instrumental Artist. Largely a solo album of straightforward traditional tunes, it dumbfounded many of his new fans. But by now, MacIsaac was addicted to crack cocaine and his career subsequently spiralled out of control. Various lewd comments about his gay lifestyle, as well as deliberately flashing his genitalia on

a Late Night with Conan O'Brien appearance, mired him in controversy. He declared bankruptcy in 2000 and three years later lost most of his possessions, including his instruments, when his house burned down. It took several hard years to find a way back to some semblance of normalcy. But his recovery was such that he featured prominently in the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver in front of a global television audience estimated at more than a billion. This past spring he received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Cape Breton University for his contributions to the region's storied music. He is, after all, the first islander to earn a living playing the fiddle—a fact that bodes well for future generations.

"Kids growing up now have people like Natalie and myself and the Barra MacNeils that they can look up to for the idea of success. Even if they're not going to the neighbour's house for

a cassette tape of tunes, there is still a real community sense there. That's what really builds interest. Now they don't just have the idea of playing square dancing; if they want to achieve success they can. So we're getting through to young musicians."





Charlie Musselwhite

The Penguin Eggs Interview

A true devotee and student of the blues, Charlie Musselwhite first came to Chicago at the age of 18 intending on getting a factory job in the Windy City. Already exposed to Memphis jug band legends, rockabilly, and country blues when he arrived, the idea of being a full-time musician and making records as a white blues bandleader did not occur to him. Here he tells Holger Petersen wonderful stories about his formative years in both Memphis and Chicago with the likes of Michael Bloomfield and Paul Butterfield. This interview is an excerpt from Petersen's upcoming book *Blues Roots and Music Mavericks*, to be published by Insomniac Press, October 2016.

I think it's wonderful that you moved back to the Mississippi Delta and the Clarksdale area a few years ago. Your memories of the Delta go way back, don't they?

I've got a lot of family that lived in Clarksdale and I would go visit them often. My memory of Clarksdale as a kid was – on Saturday, everybody came to town and you could not hardly walk down the street, it would be so packed with people, cars, and pickup trucks and wagons pulled by mules, people on horseback. Also, you would see those shacks, the shotgun shacks. There were rows and rows of them and now I look at places were all of those shotgun shacks used to be and they're all gone. You wouldn't even know there was anything had ever been there. It's nice that the Shack Up Inn has been able to save a few of those old shotgun shacks.

After that, it became like a ghost town. Everybody left and went North, just like I did, looking for a job in the factory. It's great to see it coming back, people moving there from all over the

world. I don't know how they find out about it but they do. It's through the music, I suppose, but it's not just music, it's authors and painters and sculptors and poets and just characters of all kinds – Southern eccentrics.

I was actually born in the hills, Kosciusko, but I had so many relatives all around the Delta, Friar's Point, too, that it was almost like a second home or a third home compared to Memphis. That's where I grew up, in Memphis, but I spent a lot of summers in Kosciusko and the area around Friar's Point and Clarksdale.

When you were young and spending time in the Delta, did you hear Sonny Payne's King Biscuit Time radio show?

I don't know if I did or not. I remember laying on the floor and just turning the dial and finding a place to listen to. I don't remember the names. I do remember getting XERF which was in Del Rio, Texas, but broadcast out of Ciudad Aucuno, Mexico. Dr. Jazzmo. That was a guy I used to listen to. And WLAC from Nashville with John R. and all those guys. WDIA in Memphis and there a station over in West Memphis. I just don't remember all of them. I didn't know I was preparing myself for a career in music at the time [laughs], or I'd have paid a lot more attention.

You lived in Memphis at a time when there were still players from the jug band era around. The Memphis Jug Band and Will Shade were still active in the '50s. Did you meet any of them?

Will Shade and Gus Cannon. Gus Cannon had his own band, the Cannon Jug Stompers. Will Shade had The Memphis Jug Band. I would go and visit Will Shade and just sit there, he and I, and we would just talk and drink. All day long people would stop by, many of them were musicians, and then when they would come by, they would bring a drink with them. Usually it was a part of socializing, and there would be these spontaneous jam sessions. Again, I wish I'd have known where I was heading or I would have been paying a-way more attention.

I met a lot of musicians there. A lot of people hung out around Will Shade's place. They had such respect for him. I guess he was considered a big man at one time in music with The Memphis Jug Band.

This would have been early '60s?

I don't remember the exact year, '60/'61/'62, something in there because I went over to Chicago in '62 and then left there the end of '67, August or September, and went to California and so those are the years [laughs]. Wish I had kept a journal or something. We were having such a good time passing around that golden harvest sherry wine, it's a little hazy in places. [laughs]

In your neighbourhood in Memphis, was there a music scene or musicians?

Well, Johnny and Dorsey Burnette lived across the street and I could go hang out there. They were way older than me. I remember one time being over there and I had never seen anybody with bloodshot eyes before, I hadn't noticed it, but Dorsey and Johnny's eyes



were just as red as they could be. And I told my Mom, I said, 'Those boys across the street, their eyes are all red', and she said, 'Well, I guess they've been doing a little drinking'.

And there was another guy who lived around the corner named Slim Rhodes. He was kind of a cross between rockabilly and country. He wore a big white hat and he would play guitar. He would have little parties out in his yard. He had a house on the corner and he would have a barbeque for the neighbourhood. Him and his band just set up there in the yard and play and serve barbeque. And he had a TV show. His brother Speck Rhodes played the bass and was sort of the court jester with a checkered suit and a funny beeny type hat and would jump around and stuff.

And next door to me lived Jimmy Griffin, who went on later to have a band called Bread, which was a pop band. It was Johnny and Dorsey that helped him. They got him out to California and got him into business.

There were other bands around. Sometimes you would just hear a band playing and you would just go and follow the sound and there would be some guys playing in their back yard or in their garage. Maybe there would be a band playing at the opening of some store or some store would be having a sale. Rockabilly was big then and so all these bands were doing rockabilly tunes so it was interesting times.

Was there any rockabilly influence on Beale Street?

Well, I think the music from Beale Street influenced rockabilly. I know that Elvis hung out on Beale Street a lot and I'm sure he was influenced by what he saw and heard. And Charlie Feathers, I really liked his music a lot; he learned guitar from Junior Kimbrough and I think they even recorded together some, too. So there is a lot of influence between blues and country guys and that's where rockabilly came from. It came together and sparked this new music called rockabilly.

Charlie, I hope you don't mind my asking about partying with Elvis Presley?

I had his phone number and I would call up and find out where the party was going to be because he would have parties around town. He would rent the entire fairgrounds where all the rides would be free and hotdogs and cokes were free, or he would rent the Memphian Theatre, which was a little neighbourhood picture show and have a couple of the latest movies and a whole lot of Road Runner cartoons. Elvis loved the Road Runner. Or he'd rent the skating rink or just some place. It would always be from midnight to daybreak and you would go there and there would be all these pretty girls and Elvis and his buddies.

So I didn't jam with him or have deep philosophical conversations with him or nothing like that. I spoke to him a few times, but I was just part of the scene. I don't remember how I got his phone number but I did have it. I keep thinking I should look through my junk and see if it's not laying around somewhere. It would be interesting to see who would answer that phone. [laughs] Usually he didn't answer the phone, it would be some girl who would answer. One time a girlfriend wanted me to call and I said, 'Why don't you call, here's the number'. She called and I could hear her listening and waiting for it pick up and she suddenly just screamed, 'It's him!' and slammed the phone down. She about busted my eardrum. That was some good times though. That was a lot of fun.

You know, Elvis was a poor kid from Mississippi and there was a lot of poor kids from Mississippi in Memphis. We were kind of low man on the totem pole there. Guys combed their hair and dressed like Elvis. It was sort of the white trash way. But the thing about Elvis when he came along is, he validated us, made us seem like, 'Aww, we ain't so bad after all'. That kind of created an air of respect for kids from Mississippi.

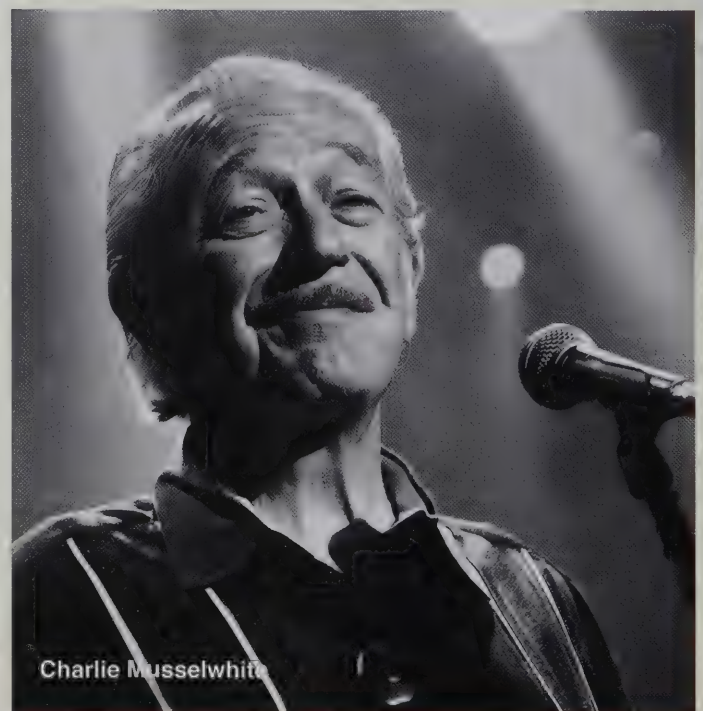
What was the turning point for you when you decided to become a working musician?

I'm still working on that. [laughs]. Well, the big turning point was my first album. It put me on the road and gave me a career. When I recorded it, I had no idea it was going to go anywhere or do anything. It was kind of almost like a lark. I already knew Sam Charters because he had come through Chicago now and then and he'd look me up. He knew that I knew where everybody was playing and I'd take him out to these joints. He had been with Prestige (Records) and recorded Tracy Nelson and had me play with her on that album and then he did the *Chicago: The Blues Today* series for Vanguard and I played on one of those with Shakey Horton. Then they asked if I wanted to make an album and I said, 'Yeah, sure I'll make an album'.

I was thinking about how much I would get for the session because I could buy myself a new amp. I remember waiting and waiting to get my session cheque after we had finished recording and the guy at the union calls me up and says, 'We got a cheque for you'. And I take the El and go downtown Chicago and go into the union office and they said, 'Well, OK, you owe us \$4 in work dues before you can have the cheque. And I didn't have \$4 so I said, 'Could I just see the cheque?'. And they showed it to me and it was \$0.36. Vanguard had deducted everything they could think of so instead of taking it out of my royalties or some other way, my session cheque came to \$0.36. So I never even got that. [laughs]

That was the *Stand Back* album. (1967, *Stand Back! Here Comes Charlie Musselwhite's Southside Band*). Was that your regular working band?

No. I knew all those guys and we played together in different situations and they were just the best guys I could get that day. We did this album in three hours. Back then sessions were three hours. If you went one minute over three hours, you'd get double union scale or something so everything was always kept to three hours, tops. So we did the whole album in three hours. [laughs]



Charlie Musselwhite



Charlie Musselwhite and Mike Bloomfield



Charlie Musselwhite: 1964

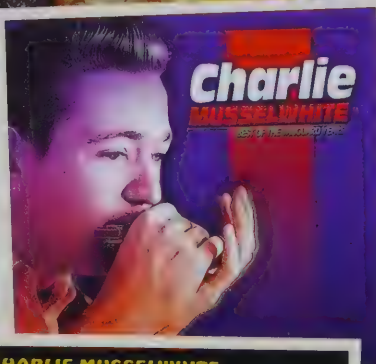
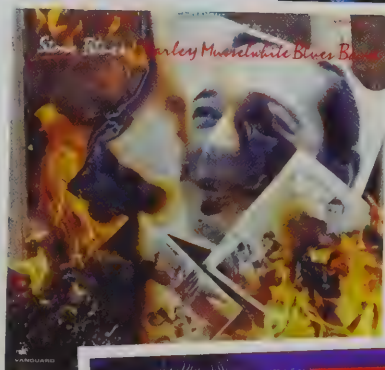
Who were the most hospitable guys on the Chicago club scene when you started getting invited on stage?

Gosh, everybody was pretty nice. Muddy [Waters] was really outgoing. [Howlin'] Wolf was a little more reserved, but he was nice to me. Little Walter was really nice. Sonny Boy [Williamson II] was a little more reserved. I don't know who was actually the nicest, but those were two nice guys – Little Walter and Muddy Waters.

And the harp players didn't mind inviting another harp player onstage?

No, like [James] Cotton was real friendly to me from the first time we met. The first time I met Cotton was in Memphis at the Ellis Auditorium. Muddy played there and after the show, I went backstage, just snuck backstage and that's where I met Cotton. I don't really remember anybody having a problem. Mostly it was all in good fun and everyone was supportive of each other.

There was this one club called Rose & Kelly's. It was like a harmonica player hang out. Walter Horton lived just down the street and he would be there all the time hanging out. Good Rockin' Charles would be there, and Carey Bell and One Armed John Wrencher. Just a lot of harp players. We would just stand shoulder to shoulder and pass the mic and the same harmonica to each other back and forth, trying to top each other. And Shakey (Walter Horton) would be sitting at the bar listening to us and when he got ready, he



would just come over and grab the mic and show us how it was done. [laughs]

He had such a mellow, sweet tone, didn't he?

Oh, yeah, and just a huge tone, too. Real fat tone and commanding. When you heard that tone, it was like you just perked up, you know?

Somebody once told me, that there was a real sense of community in those Chicago clubs.

Somebody who wasn't even a professional player who had maybe one song in their repertoire would go down into their local bar and do that song.

Yeah, everybody was really welcome. If it was just the one tune you knew, you were welcome to do it. You know, those bars are open until 4 and 5 in the morning so there was a lot of time to kill. A guy like Muddy would want somebody sitting in to kind of take up the slack so he didn't have to work the whole time. And it was real casual like that. A lot of people would sit in and to the amusement of the audience, too. They might not be so good but they just put their heart in it so much, everybody appreciated it. It was comfortable that way and real civil. Nobody was like head cutting, you know, 'I'm gonna show you' kind of thing. It was all in good faith and just really from the heart.

I was just reading in Buddy Guy's book that there was a place that Wolf would play at 7 a.m. in the morning because that was when the shift would end at one of the factories. Pay days were the best time to play for the tips.

Well, you did have a round-the-clock thing with all the factories, you know, the three shifts – the graveyard shift, the night shift, the day shift. I used



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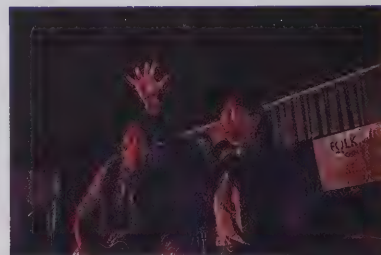
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to do a Blue Monday breakfast show that would start at 8 a.m. and go to noon. I never started at 7 a.m. that I recall, but on Monday morning it would be like all the really hard-core partiers that were still going, like hookers and gamblers and I don't know what all those people were up to. They would have this breakfast thing and you would see people putting bourbon on Corn Flakes [laughs] and we would be playing the blues. Guys like Johnny Young, Johnny Shines, and John Brim. They would be at those kinds of shows.

You were close friends with Michael Bloomfield and I gather that the two of you went to a lot of these places in Chicago together?

Michael had a car and he would come and pick me up sometimes. For awhile, I lived in Old Town, which is on the North Side, and me and Big Joe Williams lived in the back of a record store called Old Wells Record Shop on Wells and Schiller. That was the cross street, the building is still there last time I looked. Michael lived a couple of blocks away in one of these big fancy new apartments called The Carl Sanburg Apartments. He would come over all the time just to hang out with me and Joe, and play records and stuff.

Later I moved to the South Side. I lived on 61st Place between the Illinois Central railroad tracks and Dorchester. Junior Wells lived right around the corner at 61 or 6240 Dorchester. I would pass by his apartment all the time on the way to the Red Rooster Grocery Store and Liquor Store, where I'd often run into Junior. We'd be passing each other. And sometimes Mike would venture down to the South Side and pick me up there, but he didn't like that too much. I had to show him short cuts, you know, 'Take that alley', [and he'd say] 'You trying to get us killed? Man, what are we doing?' [laughs]. I'd just say, 'Just go on, man, it's cool, it's OK.' [laughs]

Was there a kind of a sense of adventure also happening on Maxwell Street on the weekends?

Oh, Maxwell was just so much fun. You'd start playing around 9 a.m. and go until around 2–3 in the afternoon and on Sundays. It was against the law to sell liquor before noon except maybe if you were in a restaurant and ordered food, you might be able to get a drink before noon. But there was a bootlegger who lived there in the neighbourhood and me and Carey Bell or Johnny Young or whoever was playing, we'd go by there and get a pint of some sort of fortified wine and drink that and we'd be all ready. Then we might take a trip back there once or twice before the day was over and we'd just play out there. You've probably seen some of those videos of Robert Nighthawk right on that back porch where we would play? We would run an extension cord under the door into the lady's kitchen, which was right on that back porch, and plug it in and that would power the amps. We usually had two harp players. It would be me and One Armed John and one of us would play and the other one would walk around with a cigar box through the crowd, taking up tips. At the end of the day, we'd split up all the tips on the table in the lady's kitchen and we'd give her some money for using her electricity and split up the rest. We'd have pockets just bulging with coins, more coins than bills. I remember making, like, 25 dollars. That was a fair amount of money back then. Then you'd go play somewhere at night.

It was a lot of fun watching people dance and you met a lot of real characters out there. A lot of people from the South were there and it was fun just to roam around and hear other music. It'd be solo players like the blind guy, Arvella Gray, or Jimmy Brewer and there would be gospel groups. I remember even seeing a mariachi group one time. You don't know who you might see playing, and see them once and maybe never

see them again.

You went to San Francisco in 1967 after your *Stand Back* album came out. I would think good timing. That scene was pretty much breaking wide open at that time.

That was really something. I had never seen anything like that. I didn't really have any interest in going to California. I didn't even know anything about California. To me, it just seemed like some place really far away and a lot of nutty people. I just didn't know anything about it. But I kept getting offers to work out there and I kept turning them down until finally somebody called me and they had a whole month of work for really good money. I thought, well, I'll just go out there and do that month and then come on back to Chicago. Man, I got off that plane and the weather was nice, the people were nice, and all these hippy girls was around and I right away knew I wasn't going back to Chicago.

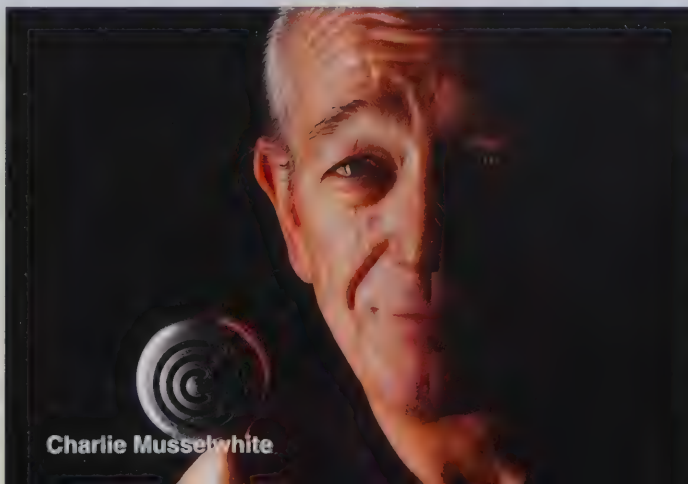
Plus, the whole West Coast seemed like there was this whole scene of places to play that paid really good money. They were way bigger places than these little joints on the South Side of Chicago. Blues was like something exotic or something. The hippies didn't know about blues and people like Bill Graham and Chet Helms were smart enough or hip enough to hire blues.

And they were playing it on underground radio. That really made a big difference, too, in San Francisco. Guys would just bring records from home and play whatever they wanted to play. So really because of them, a lot of people heard me on the radio and knew who I was. That created this work for me to come out there. First, it was the records, and then it was underground radio that put me on the road.

The music happening in San Francisco, so much of it was actually roots music. Bands were electric folk bands in a way and blues was a big part of the whole scene. And a sense of improvisation seemed to come out of that. It must have been fun for you to just fit right in?

It was. Like you say, a lot of the folk groups were just playing chords. They really didn't know how to play lead things and it was all OK. It was all nice and a lot of fun. It was just all kinds of people playing music. And people trusted Bill Graham and Chet Helms, at these auditoriums that they had. The Fillmore and Avalon Ballroom. If they knew who was on the lineup or they didn't know who it was, they just trusted those guys to book people that were good.

And they would mix it all up back then. I mean, the bill might be something like Albert King and Ravi Shankar and Count Basie or something. I don't know if that really happened but it would be that spread apart. It wouldn't be just blues or something. And it worked to have all those different kinds of music together because everyone was playing from their heart, it wasn't like commercial Top 40 music. It was a great scene.



Reviews



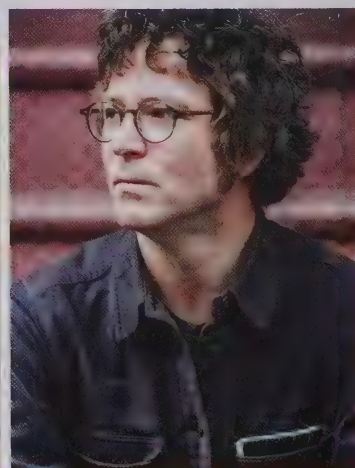
64 Connla



58 Amanda Rheame



61 9Bach



65 Vincent Cross



Mr. Martin Simpson & Mr. Dom Flemons

Mr. Martin Simpson & Mr. Dom. Flemons

Proudly Present a Selection of Ever-Popular Favourites (Fledg'ling)



If you've seen either of these two artists plying their separate ways in the past

few years you will be familiar with the repertoire that is the focus of their collaboration here. It's perhaps not surprising that Simpson and Flemons would find each other either as they're both so deeply rooted in the American music of the early 20th century and the trans-Atlantic migrations of traditional songs.

Recorded live on tour in 2015, *Proudly Present...* is a spare and unvarnished recording but utterly engrossing nonetheless. Both distinctive singers with formidable instrumental chops, here they sound like they've been playing together for decades, Simpson on slide, guitar, and banjo, and Flemons on bones, banjo, and harmonica.

The songs, like I said, are not unfamiliar ones (mainly): *John Hardy*, *Little Sadie* and *Coalman Blues* (with Flemons's incredible

melody on quills). But when all is said and done, *Proudly Present...* is mainly about two guys having fun, playing the music they both love. I feel privileged to be listening in.

— By Richard Thornley

Genevieve and the Wild Sundays

Fine Line (Independent)



Genevieve and the Wild Sundays is the name of an energetic female quartet from Vancouver

Island that consists of Genevieve Charbonneau (chief songwriter), Laura Carleton, Kelly Sherwin, and Chandra Crowe, with vocal and instrumental contributions by all four.

The original folk-roots music sounds at times like old country, old-time music with a bluegrass flavour, and other times like contemporary pop, albeit acoustically based. Their tight harmonies soar above the instruments sounding at times like ABBA and even The Beatles on occasion, but mostly like themselves. The sound is

magnificent—if you like harmony singing, this album has your name on it, and if you're in a song circle you'll be adding Wild Sunday songs to your gathering's repertoire in no time.

Fine Line presents a nice range of material for them to showcase their vocal and instrumental talents. Starting with the plaintive *Highway*, the album then offers the humorous *Lost Cell Phone Blues*, followed by a series of foot-stomping originals that carry you along for a grand ride. It's difficult to pick a favourite track, but *Ripples*, *Winter's Time*, and *Blackberry Crisp* are catchy and



durable. Weaving through guitars, mandolin, upright bass, the quartet shines through them all. This is easily the freshest release I've heard this year. Highly recommended.

— By Gene Wilburn

Todd Grebe & Cold Country

Citizen (Cold Country Music)



Although he's been a recording artist since 2008, this new third disc may be

Alaskan Todd Grebe's best outing yet. There's not a sour note or a weak lyric on any of the 12 tracks. Each of these tunes would stand up to radio play and if the music business still had such a thing as a hit single, *Ain't That Fine* would be one.

If you want a Christmas classic, there's *Let's Make Love for Christmas*, and *Criminal Style* and *Box of Wine* are examples of the kind of memorable writing that make songwriters famous. His partner, Angela Oudean's, fiddle playing is outstanding on all tracks and demonstrates what made their old bluegrass band, Bearfoot, such a treat.

Other outstanding musicians on the disc are Nathan May for his licks on the Telecaster, Steve Hinson on pedal steel, and veteran drummer Larry Atamanuik, who's worked with everybody from Seatrain and King Biscuit Boy, through Tony Rice, Tim O'Brien, to Emmylou Harris, Alison Krauss, and Linda Ronstadt.



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You just don't get better musicians than these. For all the disc's musical mastery, though, it's Grebe's wry and weathered voice and whip-smart lyrics that carry the day. Top stuff!

— By Barry Hammond

Jez Hellard & The Djukella Orchestra

Heavy Wood (Djukella Records)



The package includes a detailed booklet, in which Hellard extols the virtues of the cassette mix-tape, which he then tries to emulate with this collection of songs, styles, and sentiments.

There are traditional songs, originals such as Scott Cook's *The Lord Giveth (And The Landlord Taketh Away)*, and a rare Hellard composition *We Have The Time*, and a couple of sets of jigs and reels—all of which makes sense when you know the translation of djukella is mongrel.

Heavy Wood is an interbreeding of influences and genres. Instrumentally it is fine, with Hellard's gymnastic harmonica playing a major highlight. I'm not a fan of his vocal style; he radically overuses the mannerism of swooping up to hit the note. Overall, much of this collection flatters to deceive. The harder Hellard tries the more I feel he is trying too hard to convince.

— By Tim Readman

Western Centuries

Weight Of The World (FreeDirt Records)



There's a lot to like about *Weight Of The World*, the debut album from Seattle's Western Centuries.

With their ability to incorporate the distinctive beats of Waylon-in-the-'70s roadhouse disco, Cajun hip shakers, tight Texas two-step, and forlorn, slow-burning waltzes, Western Centuries pay tribute to the varied styles of country music that have preceded them while bringing a light and sunny, front-

porch feel to the album that gives them a distinct feel as a band.

Even if the record feels familiar, their reedy harmonies bring a fresh feel to the table.

The songwriting on *Weight Of The World* packs a punch as well, featuring excellent, melodic choruses that recall the days when a country hit could contain more than one phrase in its hook. If there's a bright horizon for the current resurgence of grassroots country music, Western Centuries would be a welcome addition to the sunrise.

— By Michael Dunn

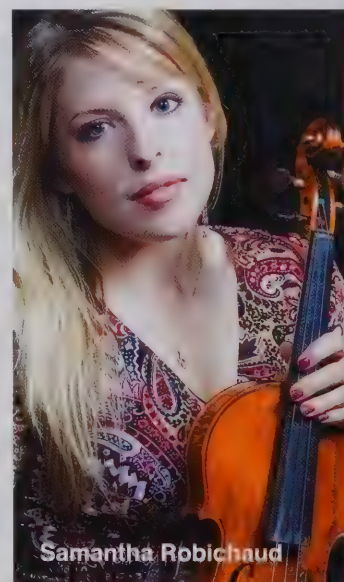
Samantha Robichaud

Simplicity (Independent)



In a crowded marketplace you have to have something different to really stand out. Canada is blessed with a great many talented fiddlers, of which Samantha Robichaud in undoubtedly one.

What makes her stand out then? Well, it's not choice of material because *Simplicity* contains a few too many overly familiar tunes, such as Morrison's *Jig*, *Temperance Reel*, and *Swallowtail*. Her arrangements and instrumental accompaniment are predictable. Like many of her contemporaries, she also tries her hand at singing and songwriting. The result is quite



ordinary and fails to impress.

All of which is frustrating because there's no doubt about her playing talent. I'd love to hear her tackle some less well known music, find herself some players who can stretch her musical imagination and showcase her strengths as a player of the fiddle. Samantha Robichaud could really stand out from the crowd, but on this release she does not.

— By Tim Readman

Various Artists

Alligator Records 45th Anniversary Collection

(Alligator Records)



Bruce Iglauer's Alligator Records has come a long way since he first built his business

around Hound Dog Taylor's career. And—scanning the lineup of blues artists listed on this 37-cut collection—so has the blues.

If you're a blues intender, pick up this treasure trove for a crash course in the blues. If you're already a fan of Chicago blues and all its spinoffs, you'll already have much of this two-disc set. From Iglauer's bare bones production of Taylor's first release, a loving fan turned his love of the blues—and the people who play them—into a passion-fired empire.

Income from the success of one disc would translate to adding more of Iglauer's musical interests to the roster as he'd train one wizened eye on transforming the misunderstood genre into something the general public could eventually absorb and appreciate, keeping the other fixed on the bottom-line. He steered the label forward with an uncommon sense of responsibility, working round-the-clock to offset the painful realities of the music business.

The fact that Alligator is still in its skin is a tribute to the blues—and to Iglauer's impeccable taste. While many labels follow the track of the dodo, Alligator projects a hopeful step forward, the bounty of which is



Söndörgő

in your hands. Son Seals, Elvin Bishop, Shemekia Copeland, Lil' Ed, The Holmes Brothers, and Koko Taylor join newer acts such as Selwyn Birchwood, Tommy Castro, Anders Osborne, Moreland & Arbuckle, and JJ Grey to forge a respectful continuity as the label embraces change with positive optimism. Endemic to the blues is the loss of its elders and many of

the acts on parade here have left us over the years but, as Iglauer would be quick to tell you, their music never dies. In fact, over the past 45 years, it all seems to have aged quite nicely.

— By Eric Thom

Söndörgő

Live Wires (World Music Network)



The audience hoots and yells, the frenetic pace never flags; accordion, piccolo, and drum swirl—and the powerful mighty-mite, the tambura, rules. The Hungarian band Söndörgő is a troupe of three brothers, a cousin, and one unrelated soul, who communicate at a fevered pitch on a swath of instruments—tambura, shepherd's flute, clarinet, saxophone, and the high-pitched derbuka drum.

Live Wires is Söndörgő's live album, recorded over a period of five years in venues around Europe, from Denmark to Italy to

Hungary. The music draws from Serbian, Macedonian, Turkish, Jewish, and Roma traditions. The driver of the music, the tamboura, is a Slavic mandolin arrayed in a variety of sizes—alto, kontra, cello—each with its own voice, each penetrating.

The boiling pace is occasionally cooled with lovely and stately tunes such as *Cele Noči*, a sweetly heartbreaking melody. *Drago Kolo* features the shepherd's flute in a folk song archived by Bela Bartok. The band is on a mission to revitalize forgotten music of the Balkans and bring it to an entirely unsuspecting audience. With their joyful exuberance, Söndörgő captivates.

— By Lark Clark

Ray Hearne

Umpteen (No Masters)



English singer/songwriter Hearne tells stories from South Yorkshire's

once-vibrant coal and steel communities. There are songs about their prime and even more about their decline in the post-Thatcher years, all sung in local dialect.

Words such as snicket, ginnel, nethermand, and fettled abound, and help convey a rich sense of time and place. The tunes are often borrowed—*O Little Town of Bethlehem* and *The Streets of Laredo* both make an appearance—which contributes to a sense of familiarity. Sentiments expressed range from sepia-tinted nostalgia in *The Longest Hot Summer*, mourning and loss in *The Hales of Henry Street*, and political outrage in *Moonpenny Hill*.

There's a likeable honesty and refreshing simplicity to the presentation of the material and the song's arrangements. Anyone with even a passing interest in the prelude and aftermath of the U.K.'s '84/85 miners' strike in South Yorkshire will find much to engage them here...likely for *Umpteen* listens.

— By Tim Readman



Koko Taylor:
Alligator Records



The Breath

Maivish

Sunlight into Blue (Independent)



In their debut recording, *Sunlight Into Blue*, Maivish (colloquial

English for Song Thrush), features arrangements of traditional songs and tunes as well as original songs by members of the band: Adam Broome, Jaige Trudel, and Matthew Olwell, plus guest musicians Nils Fredland and Yann Falquet.

Broome, who grew up in the Cotswolds in England, has been interpreting guitar technique in the folk genre since making music his profession in 1976. Trudel, who plays violin, was raised in rural Vermont amidst a musical family and is a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique. Olwell grew up in a family of instrument makers and performed for nine years with the Maryland-based Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble.

They have brought their talent into a harmonious union on *Sunlight Into Blue*, which varies between traditional fiddle tunes and traditional-tinged vocals. The album starts off with *Cuckoo's Nest*, which is part of the Morris dance repertoire of Bledington, Gloucestershire, followed by *Lonesome Woods*, a traditional English song of unrequited love. Other tunes include *The Rambling Comber*, *Four Loom Weaver*,

What Will We Do, *Sunlight Into Blue*, and *Lilies/Embers*.

Most tracks are presented in a traditional style, with a bit of surprise provided by trombone on a few of the tracks. A very pleasant album that is wholesomely consistent from beginning to end.

— By Gene Wilburn

The Breath

Carry Your Kin (Real World Records)



I'm not sure what I expected from *Carry Your Kin*, a collaboration between Afro-Celt alumnus Rioghnach Connolly and The Cinematic Orchestra's Stuart McCallum. Singer Connolly, with her roots in Irish folk, and McCallum, with his affection for electronics and jazz, would seem an unlikely pairing, but *Carry Your Kin* is a pretty fine debut for all that.

The production (as befits McCallum's background and Tchad Blake's role as mix engineer) is immaculate: lush, widescreen soundscapes of desperate warmth and beauty. Connolly's voice is equally lush (I read somewhere that some of her backing vocals are 30 tracks deep!) and a perfect match to McCallum's poised and precise musical haiku.

As a debut it's not likely to win over the kids... Rough edges do not abound. But it's a deep, rich (dare I say mature?) album that'll

keep the rest of us busy for quite some time, thank you very much.

— By Richard Thornley

Amanda Rheume

Holding Patterns (Independent)



The uplifting, inspirational quality found on much of Amanda Rheume's

Holding Patterns is the sort of mid-afternoon festival fare that fits better in the trees and the sunshine than it does in the dark recesses of a downtown dive bar.

A well-polished effort from Rheume and producer Jim Bryson, it features some excellent playing throughout, notably the atmospheric, echo-laden guitar stylings of Blair Hogan, but *Hold-*

ing Patterns is well short on grit until the swampy blues of *Blood From A Stone* kicks in more than halfway through the record.

Rheume's voice is strong and genuine through the album's 12 tracks, and wouldn't sound out of place on country radio, and the production would be a welcome respite from radio's endless lack of dynamics.

Finally though, on *Dead Horse*, Rheume's lyrics catch up to her voice, abandoning inspirational clichés for something more disconsolate, with emotional weight to spare, "*You've been waiting on this for so long, you finally got your song.*"

— By Michael Dunn

Dark for Dark

All Dressed (Headless Owl Records)



Three lovely voices—belonging to Jess Lewis, Melanie Stone, and Rebecca

Zolkower—decided to unite in Halifax in 2012 under the name Dark for Dark. *All Dressed* is their sophomore recording effort.

Now when I was becoming musically conscious in the late 1960s, I fell in love with the jangly guitar sound that came out of my radio every time The Byrds and The Searchers were played. It soon fell to the wayside, seemingly abandoned and lost in the shuffle of changing tastes.



Well...what a pleasant surprise to hear the opening chords of the tune *Orchard* from *Dark for Dark*. I love that sound. It makes you want to hear more. And then there was that sound again front and centre in the song *Owls* later in this six-song EP. Once the nostalgic guitar riffs finish, these delicate and exquisite voices kick in, perfectly matched in each song.

Producer Jay Crocker and drummer Matthew Gallant have helped the trio achieve the resulting tasty collection of melancholic pop folk songs (all written by Rebecca Zolkower). I want to hear more.

– By les siemieniuk

The High Bar Gang

Someday the Heart Will Trouble the Mind

(True North Records)



It started off as a side project for a bunch of folkies and rock musicians, but the

High Bar Gang is producing some mighty fine bluegrass music.

With their second album, the gang seems to have found its own sound, with a heavy emphasis on tight vocal harmonies. Hell, with five great singers among this group of seven, including talent such as Barney Bentall, Shari Ulrich, and Wendy Bird, strong vocals come naturally.

Not that they are slouches on their instruments. Colin Nairne is as slippery a picker as just about anyone on mandolin and guitar, and Ulrich, who has always been a fine violin player, has adapted well to the bluegrass fiddle style.

Yes, the pickin's good, and the songs are well-picked, including selections by Peter Rowan, Utah Phillips, Flatt and Scruggs, Steve Earle, and my fave, Dolly Parton's *Silver Dagger*.

This is a fine album of bluegrass covers, conveying the joy of the genre, despite the scowls on the cover. With some of Canada's top songwriters in the band, it would be nice to see some originals on their next outing. Then the bar can be set even higher.

– By Mike Sadava



Jim Kweskin & Geoff Muldaur

Penny's Farm (Kingswood Records)



You'll be forgiven if you groan a bit when you see the track listing of this new

release from Jim Kweskin and Geoff Muldaur: *Penny's Farm*. Like, right there. Did you breathe out a bit, an almost imperceptible sigh, just then when I typed *Penny's Farm*? Did you have flashbacks of John Cohen talking about how Dylan took *Penny's Farm* from the Harry Smith anthology

and turned it into *Maggie's Farm*? When you read Geoff Muldaur, did you think of Maria, and her marriage to Geoff? And all those rehashes of the basket houses, and the tour buses, and the black and white clip of Maria, newly single, swaying with Jim Kweskin at the Bitter End, or the Gaslight, or whatever it was.

These are names and songs that have a lot of miles on them, and lots of stories attached to them, too. And, yes, it can take a bit of effort to push play on the mail-order gramophone. But, actually, you really should. Just put all that

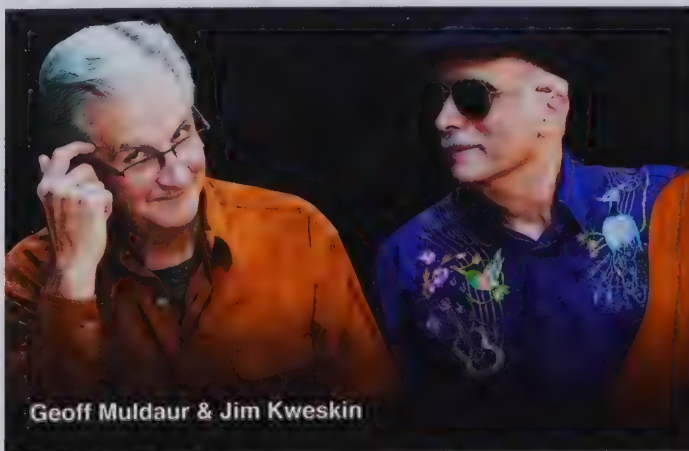
stuff away, put down the CD cover, and forget all the names and the miles. Try to listen to all of these songs as if for the first time.

Because it's absolutely worth any effort you can give it, though it doesn't take all that much, really. You'll soon be reminded why you remember all that stuff in the first place.

These are just fantastic songs. They're like children's stories, and they make children out of all of us. Tell me again about how my good wife will catch more fish than me. And how you played cards in Spain. And how Frankie shot her man. There she is, still wearing the kimono. Yes, it certainly is a little while to be here and a long time to be gone. I know exactly what you mean.

Truly, there's a lot to love on this release. The guitar work is great, and the arrangements are simple, charming, and superb. They're joined by Cindy Cashdollar and Suzy Thompson. As my daughter would say: I know, right? Yes, I know.

And that picture on the cover? With the shack and the chickens? If you squint a bit, and turn a bit





Ginger St. James

to the side, doesn't it look a lot like home? I think it does. It really does.

— By Glen Herbert

Courtney Marie Andrews

Honest Life (Mama Bird Recording)



This is a brilliant release in all kinds of ways: musicianship, arrangement,

recording. Each one of those is wonderfully on display.

It's there in the details, such as the strings entering on *Only In My Mind*, and then the pizzicato, or the way she sings *Barcelona*.

There are harmonies added to isolated phrases that make you think, wow, that's brilliant. So beautiful in themselves, but also so delightful in the level skill that they belie, and the way they help support and propel the narrative.

Still, the writing is the thing that stands out, even given the quality of the setting and the skill. Ask anyone about writing songs and, more often than not, they'll say something about a hook. But a hook isn't songwriting, it's marketing. Selling something.

Writing, good writing, tells something. Though it's even more than that. There's a pleasure that comes from finding the structures, in realizing the care and the complexity that went into crafting these pieces. There's a delight that comes from seeing something that is just so brilliantly constructed. (Have you listened to Lightfoot's *Great Canadian Railroad Trilogy* recently? It's as much a marvel as it ever was.)

The first track, *Rookie Dreaming*, sneaks in, and just when you're doubting it, it delights you. Before we get to the confessional voice—"I was movin' too fast" etc.—she's already broadening the narrative, gesturing to a universal: "*I was singing with the choir on the train / I was a travelling man / I did not yet have a name / I was a 1960s movie / I was a one-night love story.*" Certainly, that's the thing about confessional songwriting. It's not about grabbing a guitar and telling us about your day.

She often has the diction of Joni Mitchell, the full vowels and clipped r's and t's. She adds her own harmonies, as Mitchell did, and adds similar ornaments, uses

similar phrasing. Most important, of course, is a similar attention to narrative. Like Mitchell, it might sound like she's telling you about what happened last week, as in *Table for One* when she sings "*Table for one / I've got no one I'm waiting on / I just pulled into town an hour ago / from the streets of Houston / to this diner in Ohio.*"

But she's not, and it's the idea that comes to mind, not the details. By the end of album, we don't know her any more than we did at the beginning. Because it's not about her. It's about us. I know that music isn't a race, but if this album doesn't win some awards this year, I don't know what.

— By Glen Herbert

Ginger St. James

One For The Money (Busted Flat Records)



At 28 minutes, this nine-track release—St. James's second disc—seems

more a notion than full-fledged commitment, yet it moves her towards her dream of being a true rockabilly filly—as the packaging suggests. The good news is she's surrounded by high-quality

musicians who build her an enthusiastic bed of fully charged accompaniment to supplement her vocals and energy. The bad news is she seems to lack the dynamism demanded by this fiery genre to put it over the top. As a result, *One For The Money* simmers along rather than achieving a complete boil. As the rockabilly category evolved from a collision of garage rock, surf guitar, country-rock, blues, and, later, punk, it simply means this artist has more homework to do to make things more interesting. To be totally fair, her songwriting is more than up to snuff—eight songs are originals or co-writes.

— By Eric Thom

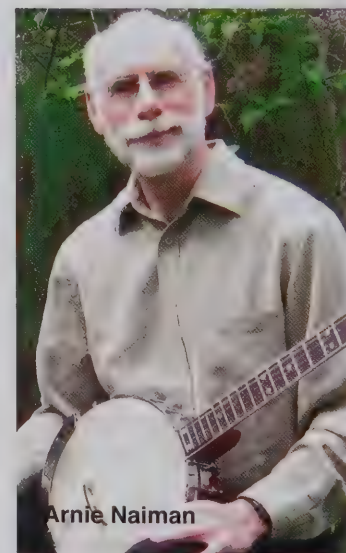
Arnie Naiman

My Lucky Stars (Merriweather Records)



You've got to love this, and I'll tell you why. Look at the liner notes. Each song

lists the people that join Naiman, adding their stuff to his. Chris Coole's there pretty much on every one. Love that. Naiman is credited on every track, less because he's there than because he wants us to know which banjo he played: Vega Tubaphone, Romero. Love that! Honestly, gives your heart a bit of a thrill at every mention. Then, right after the banjo, there's the tuning he used. Love that!!!



Arnie Naiman

The reason I love all of this, and you should, too, is because Naiman himself so clearly loves it. There's no other reason. He's from Toronto. That says something. No, there's no money in the banjo, and if you live in Toronto, it's not cool either. If not for a very deep love, this wouldn't be here at all. He loves clawhammer banjo, it's tone, the tunes, the lilt, and it shows.

He wants to share it. And he does, quietly, carefully, and as comfortably as an old shoe. This is a beautiful, thoughtful, glorious collection of tunes that we can get lost in precisely because Naiman does. Love it, love it, love it.

— By Glen Herbert

M.D. Dunn

Solace (Feathermoon)



Mark Dunn, known professionally as M.D., is a Sault Ste. Marie, ON-

based poet, college professor, and musician who has released his seventh album, *Solace*, with 12 new pieces, including four guitar instrumentals: *Miracles Happen*, *Snow Angels*, *Seasons*, and *The Companion*. There's an echo of Bruce Cockburn in Dunn's guitar work with driving rhythms that veer suddenly into unexpected key shifts, delve into minor passages, then emerge smiling in the major keys they began in. The instrumentals are engaging guitar journeys that explore sound and acoustic space. By themselves they would be a compelling reason to acquire this album, but that's only scratching the surface.

In addition to being a highly talented player, Dunn is also a talented lyricist, bringing his poetic sensibilities and pleasant voice to songs such as *Beauty*, *Master of Doubt*, *Watchful*, *On Without End*, *The Last Beautiful Thing*, and *Diamond Inside*, plus a tribute track to poet e.e. cummings, *I Thank You, God*. The combination of strong lyrics and compelling guitar work make this album shine. Additional musicians on the album include

Chris Murphy, Al Wood, Rusty McCarthy, Cliff Alloy, Britta Wolfert (background vocals), Jenny Gauvreau (background vocals), and violinist Sheldon Jaaskelainen. This one's a keeper.

— By Gene Wilburn

John Gorka

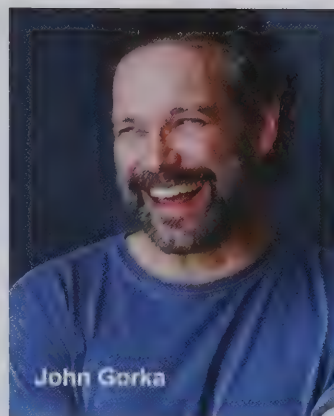
Before Beginning: The Unreleased I Know, Nashville, 1985 (Red House Records)



You can't really know *I Know* until you've listened to both versions – the

1987 debut that introduced the world to a young John Gorka, and the album's original version, recorded in '85, that was eventually scrapped and re-recorded.

Before Beginning is a new old version of the album, remastered with the fine tuning of the 2010s, with all of the '80s' bells and whistles, from electric guitar to driving saxophone. While the songs are still as beautiful as ever, this collection can be listened too much more easily; Gorka's rough draft has a bucolic kind of beauty to it and an easiness characteristic of a young man. It also features a slew of Nashville musical aces who never made it onto the final work, such as Shawn Colvin and Lucy Kaplansky. A particular



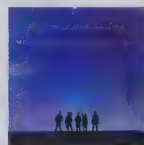
highlight is *Geza's Wailing Ways* – the only track not included in the '87 version.

Before Beginning might not have made an impact if released in 1985, but in 2016 it serves as an interesting, nostalgic peek into the mind of a young man set to become a wonderful songwriter.

— Michelle Hahn-Baker

Mountain Heart

Blue Skies (Compass Records)



Mountain Heart is a band that has included many styles (bluegrass, country, blues, folk, jam band, rock, and jazz) and many musicians over their long history. The current lineup, since 2015, is Josh Shilling, Aaron Ramsey, Seth Taylor, Jeff Partin,

and Molly Cherryholmes. Shilling is the main songwriter on this new disc, though they tackle a Bob Dylan (*Maggie's Farm*) and a pair by award-winning bluegrass and country songwriter Ronnie Bowman, formerly of the Lonesome River Band. They all have distinguished musical pedigrees and with extra mandolin and violin by guest, founding member, and studio whiz Jim VanCleve, there's talent galore on display here.

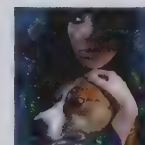
The disc romps through a free-wheeling variety of sounds and subjects, and with Shilling and Ramsey contributing soulful lead vocals and the others filling harmony and contributing hot licks galore, the listener will surely find much to latch onto.

A satisfying musical smorgasbord served up by these veteran gourmets.

— By Barry Hammond

9Bach

Anian (Real World Records)



Anian is 9Bach's third album and shows this Welsh-language band to have lost none of their power. Lisa Jen's compelling voice and instrumental work and Martin Hoyland's brilliant backing tracks—



Mountain Heart

featuring club beats, electronica, and booming bass—continue to entrance the listener. Ali Byworth (drums), Dan Swain (bass), Esyllt Glyn Jones (harp, vocals), and Mirain Roberts (vocals) all add considerably to the intricate tapestry that is their sound.

It would be lazy to dub them as the Welsh Portishead, but for a new listener, it's not a bad way of offering a generalized description of their musical oeuvre. The grooves are trip-hoppy, the layered vocal harmonies are swooping and dreamy, and the electronica is melded with guitars, harps, and piano. This truly has the sound of fusion between the immediate future and the mystical past—a kind of druidic dub music, which should appeal to *Penguin Eggs* and *Mojo* readers alike.

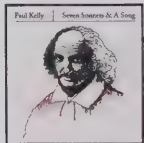
— By Tim Readman



Laurel Thomsen & Dan Frechette

Paul Kelly

Seven Sonnets and a Song (Cooking Vinyl Limited)



It isn't surprising that an acclaimed wordsmith like Paul Kelly would have a love of Shakespeare. When I heard the concept of this album, I wasn't sure how listenable it would be but I was very pleasantly surprised by this collection using six of Shakespeare's sonnets as lyrics. *Seven Sonnets and a Song*

features a variety of musicians, including members of his own band: Peter Luscombe, Bill MacDonald, Ash Naylor, Cameron Bruce, and Vika and Linda Bull. The one non-Shakespeare piece, sung by Vika Bull, is *My True Love Hath My Heart*, written by Sir Philip Sidney, who was a contemporary of Shakespeare's.

The subject matter is a far cry from some of Kelly's more blue-collar, working-man focused

work but with his solid arrangements and the familiarity in the sound, this album should still be quite accessible for any of his fans.

The album opens with the lounge-y *Sonnet 138*, and continues with arrangements of sonnets 73 and 18 that will inevitably be compared to Dylan's sound. Perhaps Shakespeare could have been a folksinger himself because the sonnets about unfaithful mistresses, mortality, and long-distance love, in Kelly's hands, became tunes that would have had a place on coffee house stages of the '60s.

— By Tanya Corbin

Dan Frechette & Laurel Thomsen

Between the Rain (Independent)



Here is a fair new release from the Canadian-American pairing of Dan

Frechette and Laurel Thomsen.

The duo has the beautiful rapport of musical kindred spirits as Frechette's guitar interplays seamlessly with Thomsen's judicious violin, sometimes with a

spry playfulness, other times with passionate fervour.

Between the Rain demonstrates the strength of this pairing, as Frechette and Thomsen maintain their absolute harmony while jumping from genre to genre, from the groovy jazz of *Carry Our Bones* to the front-porch easy listening of *Serenading With You*.

In particular, Thomsen's voice stands out on this album, with its fascinating undertones and range, while Frechette's phenomenal guitar playing adds rich texture to every song. But while Frechette and Thomsen both succeed as prodigious players, it is their songwriting that sets them apart with raw instrumentation and well-strung lyrics. Some of the album's greatest writing achievements include *Glory In My Soul* and *Vagabond Heart Mountain*. Neither Frechette nor Thomsen are songwriting novices, but their third album has a freshness and youth to it. While they don't seem to have found their exact sound yet, this is a promising third album ripe with potential, born of a well-partnered pair.

— By Michelle Hahn-Baker



Paul Kelly

Blue Moon Marquee

Gypsy Blues (Independent)



Aside from its rustic, acoustic blues feel, the first thing that strikes any listener about this Vancouver-based band of two is A.W. Cardinal's raw-throated vocals. Sounding like an extra-gruff Tom Waits with strep throat, this feels more like a solo outing as Badlands Jass (Jasmine Colette) contributes little more than acoustic bass and rhythm.

Her welcome vocal support comes in with the murderous *Double Barrel Blues*, providing a fuller sound and greater depth to these strong, self-penned compositions. Beyond this, it's a continuation of the same groove established with their first two releases—not that that's not serious accomplishment. Only this time out, there's no backing band, resulting in a more intimate outing, albeit a little less intense.

Blues meets ragtime, with a tip of the bowler hat to swing jazz, *Blue Moon Marquee* manages to create rough-hewn magic that conjures simpler, more dangerous times.

Throughout, the mood remains playful yet doesn't swing quite as hard as it did with the added instrumentation. Not a bad thing. Just a new thing. And what you hear is what you'd get live.

— By Eric Thom



Shooglenifty

The Untied Knot (Shoogle Records)



The seventh studio release from Scotland's purveyors of 'acid croft' music sees them relying a little less on the electronica-influenced grooves of yore and leaning a little more heavily on melody. This is most emphatically underlined with the inclusion of vocals by Gaelic singer Kaela Rowan, which add a new dimension to their richly layered sound.

That's not to say that they've

lost anything in the area of danceability. The music still grooves as much as ever. *The Scorpion/The Devil's Breath Hornpipe* throbs along insistently while the tune brings a bluegrass influence to the fore. *Samhla Reel/Scolpaig* is more old school Shooglenifty, with weaving guitar lines intersecting with a vocal chant under a pulsating clubland groove. *Peaches/Monkswell Road/Meal Do Bhrògan* features Rowan's vocals soaring over an instrumental hypnotic frenzy. Twenty-five years on from their debut, Shooglenifty are still innovating, elating, stimulating and creating. Long may it continue!

— By Tim Readman

airwaves with a new CD release, *Sunny Jim*, which features primarily new material. And through the magic of studio recording, Gordon is able to exhibit his multi-instrumental virtuosity by playing acoustic and electric guitars, piano, trille, banjo, accordion, harmonica, tin whistle, recorder, and even trumpet to accompany his vocals.

He is backed by Evan Gordon on acoustic guitar and bass and Geordie Gordon on bass, fiddle, electric guitar, and percussion, and a splendid backup chorus.

One of the hallmarks of Gordon's songwriting is his use of simple, commonplace language and everyday emotions captured in the way of a photographer who shows you something new and fresh in everyday things. From the bouncy opening track, *Sunny Jim*, to the closing track, a terrific a cappella version of *Frobisher Bay* (the only older song on the album), the tuneful songs keep your foot tapping and inspire you to sing along. The pace is varied and the arrangements are distinctly different from track to track. A fine CD release from a seasoned pro'.

— By Gene Wilburn

James Gordon

Sunny Jim (Borealis)



One of Canada's most prolific and best-known songwriters, James Gordon, who was part of Tamarack for 20 years and songwriter-in-residence for the CBC Radio *Ontario Morning* show, writing a new song weekly about Ontario towns for *Hometown Tunes*, has graced the



Connla

River Waiting (Independent)



From the first easy notes of opening tune *Escadáríum*, the flutes of Ciaran

Carlin draw you in. Although this is Connla's debut album, the young band from Northern Ireland have a strong background in their various instruments, having met while studying music at Ulster University. From the city of Derry, Ciara McCafferty (vocals), Ciaran Carlin (whistles), and Paul Starrett (guitar) have been known on the local scene for some time. Emer and Conlan Mallon, from Armagh, fill out the band on harp and uilleann pipes.

Connla has accrued numerous accolades in their home country and beyond, including being named New Group of the Year by the *Irish American News*. The album is a mix of originals—tunes and songs—as well as some older trad' songs, and a very capable cover of David Francey's *Saints and Sinners*. *The Enchanted* stands out as a showcase for the harp of Emer Mallon; and the melancholy *For Doc* displays the delicate guitar of Starrett.

Overall, this is a more than satisfying first listen to a band I hope we will see more of, as they would be a worthy addition to any festival lineup. Only the original lyrics show any sign of immaturity, but there is no doubt they will get even better with age.

— By Tanya Corbin

Clint Morgan

Scofflaw (Lost Cause Records)



I've always found the word scofflaw fascinating... and amusing. A

scofflaw is somehow not as scary as an outlaw. There seems to be an element of maybe the problem could partly be with the law. It also made me laugh that Clint Morgan a singer, songwriter, piano player, and, according to his bare



bio, a lawyer, chose to use *Scofflaw* as a title.

So, what about Mr. Morgan's *Scofflaw*? It's a weighty 19 songs long, a thematic collection of songs about the aforementioned scofflaws, outlaws, and misguided and misdirected individuals whose lives took dark turns in their unfolding.

Here's a sampling of the song titles: *I Got A Gun*, *Don't Know Where To Turn*, *D.B. Cooper Blues*, *I Love Robbing Banks*, *Bad Man Blues*, *A Sackful Of Cash*, *Send Me To The 'lectric Chair*...

You get the picture. There are songs dealing with fellas such as Doc Holliday, Clyde Barrow, and Billy the Kid. There is a lovely booklet with the lyrics and quotes from the Bible, Baby Face Nelson's sister, John Dillinger, and other miscreants. We all know crime is a dead-end street, so in the tail end of the collection the consequences of wrong turns and perhaps the possibility redemption is raised.

Scofflaw is produced by Maria Muldaur and she does a couple of great vocal turns, especially on *Soft And Tenderly* *Jesus Is Calling*. The players she put together to musically flesh out the songs and bolster Clint Morgan's gravelly dark voice are also a treat and deliver musically interesting and complex arrangements with skill and aplomb.

All in all, this entire ambitious project is a huge success and...it sounds outlaw—I mean scofflaw. Good work, Mr. Morgan.

— By les siemieniuk

The Marrieds

Fire In The Flame (Independent)



The third disc release from London, ON's The Marrieds continues to showcase the songwriting of the female half of this duo, Jane Carmichael, who snags all the composition credits with the exception of the second track, *Fingers Crossed*, where she shares with husband and fellow vocalist, Kevin Kennedy.

Carmichael definitely has a knack with phrases and music such as the catchy: "*You make everything better / You do, I must confess And it's all because a boy wrote a letter / It's all because a girl said yes,*" or the playful alliteration in Rita: "*Rita take me on down the Rideau River.*"

The duo sound like they're having fun and enjoying themselves and it communicates to the listener. Producer Matt Weston contributes on drums, organ, and synth bass and does a fine job making everything sound clear, sharp, and well-positioned in the sonic landscape. The addition of strings on some tracks by Tanya Charles (violin), Danielle Girard

(violin), Brenna McLane (viola), Eli Bender (cello) adds a classy polish to those numbers. Top marks for great sound in general.

— By Barry Hammond

Al Lerman

Slow Burn (Independent)



Al Lerman's been doing a slow burn since becoming a

founding father

and integral component of Fathead some 24 years ago, amassing a storied reputation as a talented songwriter and master of both harp and saxophone. As a player, Al was always the adventurous one, injecting the band with elements of R&B, reggae, and a strong element of soul as the band worked to redefine the nature of roots and blues.

As a result, Al's solo outings are welcome diversions as he applies a fresh perspective of "life in the country", gaining new focus to see where it takes him. *Slow Burn* is classic Al—close your eyes and *Don't Push Your Mess On Me* could easily be a Fathead song with its rollicking (Omar Tunnoch) bass line and backup chorus (Jana Reid, Tunnoch).

Al's in charge, bringing his surprisingly agile voice into the foreground of these dozen originals, while surrounding himself with talented friends capable of underlining his phenomenal harp skills, breathing substantial life

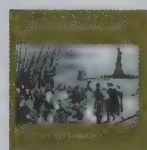


into each sturdy, blues-based composition. The title track caps the album off beautifully as guitar and harp weave an instrumental spell in which you can practically see the smoke curl and dance as it rises from the ashtray depicted on the cover.

— By Eric Thom

Cathryn Craig & Brian Willoughby

In America (Cabritunes)



Here's the skinny if these names are new to you: they've been together for more

than 19 years and just recently got married. Cathryn Craig is from Virginia. She sang with Chet Atkins, The Righteous Brothers, and Shel Silverstein. Brian Willoughby was a member of Strawbs for years and years and played with Mary Hopkin, among others. He also released an album in 1979 with Dave Cousins called *Old School Songs* that is a highly cherished and listened to part of my own collection. Disclosure—I've always loved his guitar playing.

So on to *In America*. The goods get delivered. Boy, she can sing! Can he ever play guitar! They write good songs as well. A terrific mix of Nashville Americana meets English folk. A marriage made for all the right reasons. Not a dud

song in the mix.

Although the guitar and vocal works are the out-front standouts, the arrangements feature a cast of terrific sidemen who do not set a foot wrong, adding tasteful touches of banjos, penny whistles, et al when needed.

It really is a terrific collection of songs, all originals except for a refined nod to their collective pasts with great versions of *You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling* and Mary Hopkin's *Those Were The Days*.

All in all, a keeper. I keep listening to it.

— By les siemieniuk

Vincent Cross

Old Songs For Modern Folk (Rescue Dog Records)



Vincent Cross is an old soul in a young man's body. In an era where the lines

between folk music and pop are blurred, Cross harkens back to very early Dylan and farther back, to Woody Guthrie, to come out with an album of pure unadorned folk.

The New York-based Irish man, accompanied only by guitar or clawhammer banjo, takes familiar melodies or his own melodies that sound like they were written eons ago and applies a combination of traditional lyrics and modern scenarios.



For example, *Michael Brown* is a lament for the victim of the infamous police shooting in Ferguson, MO, set to the well-known Mississippi John Hurt song *Louis Collins*, with the same refrain of "*angels laid him away*". Or *Alone*, which borrows a chorus from *Dark Holler* but mourns the loneliness of New York City, where "*the whole world's a bottle and life is but a dram / when it gets empty it ain't worth a damn*".

The album is full of familiar snatches of lyric and melody, but somehow retains its integrity as deeply personal. This is the real thing.

— By Mike Sadava

Thom Swift

The Legend of Roy Black (Independent)



The East Coast feel is immediate on Thom Swift's fourth release, *The Legend of Roy Black*, a relaxed and introspective set arranged to compliment Swift's lived-in baritone, suiting his narrative lyrical style with aplomb. The chime of Asa Brosius's pedal steel sits high in the mix with some charming Acadian fiddle work from JP Cormier, and the rhythm of Tom Easley's upright bass and Swift's acoustic guitar hang far enough back to accent the lyrical content of Swift's songs.

The production on *The Legend of Roy Black* is subtle, with an authentic, coastal kitchen-party feeling. *Toney River Drift* showcases Swift's lowdown resonator Atlantic blues riffs on a cut that

feels so live, he could be in the next room. *On Broken Glass* in particular, Swift and co-producer Charles Austin bring a beautiful dynamic sensibility to the affair, where a harmony riff rises high enough to beat back the tide.

— By Michael Dunn

Belle Plaine

The Unrequited Love (Independent)



I thought Belle Plaine was a town in Saskatchewan. Turns out there are two—but this

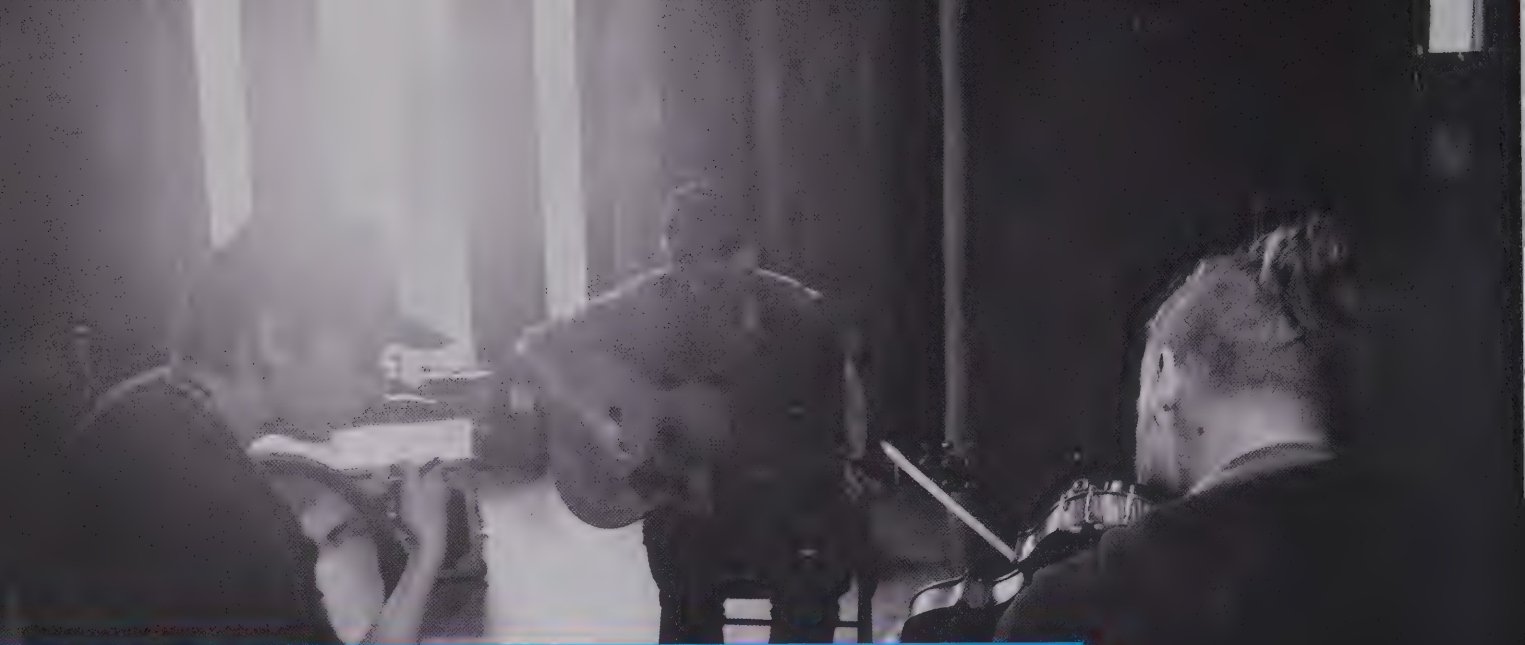
one (a.k.a. Melanie Hankewich) hails from Fosston, some three hours north. And, judging from the full house present at this live recording, made in Regina on Valentine's Day 2014, everybody knows about her but me.

Despite the peculiar-looking packaging (a lone, litho'd wolf standing on a snowy highway), Belle Plaine (the singer) has an all-encompassing range, favouring blues and jazz-based covers along with her own well-crafted material, which openly embraces folk and country.

On this special night, she's supported by a revolving cast of talented friends who tastefully embellish her ideas with backup vocals, keyboards, acoustic bass, drums, guitar, horns, and accordion. Schooled in jazz and recording, Plaine tripped on and off her musical path a few times, arriving at the realization, in 2010, that her greatest joy comes from performing for an audience.

This joy is remarkably audible on *The Unrequited Love*, a two-part, 18-song performance. A little Billie, a little Tom Waits, some Kristofferson and, best of all, her originals. Of special note, a tribute written in her mother's honour, *Frozen In Obscurity*, touches nerves in its simple beauty. Above all, a warm, charming stage manner and her insightful backgrounders to each song makes for a most pleasant surprise.

— By Eric Thom



Ten Strings and a Goat Skin

Le trio traditionnel de l'Î.-P.-É. prend un grand bond artistique avec de l'intuition et du style.

Par Doug Gallant

Caleb Gallant n'avait que douze ans quand sa mère est retournée d'un festival de violon avec un album qui a changé la façon dont il percevait la musique traditionnelle.

C'était une première édition de *De temps antan*, un groupe québécois. L'album a donné l'envie à Gallant, qui deviendrait le percussionniste de *Ten Strings and a Goat Skin*, de jouer leur type de musique parce qu'il était si différent de ce qu'il avait entendu sur l'Île du Prince Édouard.

«Je jouais l'album dans la voiture lorsque ma mère nous conduisait en ville. J'étais complètement soufflé», raconte Caleb. «C'était complètement différent et beaucoup plus intéressant. Les arrangements étaient complexes et il y avait tellement d'énergie. C'était là que j'ai commencé à toujours écouter».

Rowen, le frère de Caleb, est le jeune joueur de violon du trio. Il crédite un concert d'André Brunet de *De temps antan* et de Pascal Miousse de Vishten comme ayant eu le même effet sur lui.

«Avant ça, toute la musique que je connais-

sais était très localisée et très traditionnelle», a dit Rowen. «Je n'avais jamais entendu rien d'aussi dynamique avec tellement d'éléments modernes. C'était la première fois que j'ai entendu de la musique si vibrante et énergétique».

Et à ce point ils avaient déjà connu beaucoup de musique.

Lorsque votre oncle est Lennie Gallant, l'auteur-compositeur-interprète récompensé, ceci est inéluctable. De plus, d'autres membres de leur famille élargie jouait aussi.

Jesse Périard, le guitariste du groupe, a été introduit à la musique trad un peu après les frères Gallant quand il les a rencontrés à l'école secondaire. Mais depuis ce temps, il dévore cette musique.

Tous les trois sont passionnés de créer la musique qui sert hommage à la musique traditionnelle irlandaise, écossaise et acadien autour desquelles ils ont grandi. Pourtant, ils mènent cette musique à un entièrement différent endroit en l'infusant avec beaucoup plus d'éléments contemporains et de changements rythmiques. Cette passion, combinée avec la joie et l'excitation stimulées par le fait de travailler dans un endroit créatif avec des âmes soeurs a aidé Caleb, Rowen et Jesse à créer leur beaucoup anticipé et très bien-reçu deuxième album *Auprès du poêle*.

En travaillant avec le producteur Leonard Podolak de The Duhks, le trio a créé un album qui établit *Ten Strings and a Goat Skin* comme étant un des actes de trad progressif les plus formidables du pays. L'album est augmenté avec

l'utilisation d'un Hammond B3, un harmonium dément et de l'harmonisation vocale tendue.

Rowen a dit que cet album est moins ancrée par la structure traditionnelle que leur premier album, *Corbeau*, sorti il y a trois ans.

Que leur musique aurait continué à évoluer pendant cette période a été une donnée, vu la croissance individuelle de chaque musicien, le développement de leur cohésion comme une unité et la diversité de la musique à laquelle ils ont été exposés en voyageant le monde.

Jesse a expliqué qu'ils étaient beaucoup moins expérimentés en enregistrant *Corbeau*.

«On était jeune et frais quand on a enregistré *Corbeau*. On ne savait pas vraiment ce qu'on faisait, ni le style de son qu'on voulait et on n'avait toujours pas l'habileté technique de créer exactement ce qu'on voulait», il a dit.

Ce n'est plus le cas.

«On a découvert notre son», a dit Caleb. «On est allé à plusieurs festivals, on a rencontré beaucoup de personnes, on a beaucoup voyagé. On a eu beaucoup d'expérience et on a été exposé à beaucoup. Tout cela, si on le voit ou non, nous a influencé personnellement et musicalement».

Rowen a dit que le nouvel album reflète plusieurs des diverses influences auxquelles ils ont été exposés sur le circuit de festivals.

Plusieurs des plus grands festivals de musique trad ont été particulièrement influents.

«On ne trouve pas strictement de la musique traditionnelle», a dit Rowen. «Le festival Rhythm and Roots sur l'Île de Rhode a été un

de nos premiers grands festivals américains. Il a été incroyable, une fusion de styles très différents qui joignent sans heurt. Sur une scène, il se peut que vous trouvez un groupe de style pop. Puis, sur la prochaine vous avez un groupe de la musique cajun de la Louisiane. Les deux groupes jouent pendant trois heures et tout le monde danse».

Jesse a dit que le fait de voyager les a exposés à beaucoup d'autres groupes qui ont joué le circuit de festivals et qui ont pu mettre en pratique plusieurs idées musicales provenant de tous ces styles différents.

«Ils le font sans heurt, sans compromettre ce qui sont, à la face, leurs traditions», a dit Rowen.

Leur inspiration n'est pourtant pas limitée à ce auquel ils ont été exposés sur la route.

En enregistrant *Auprès du poêle*, ils ont reçu de très bons conseils de leur producteur.

«Un des plus grandes choses que Leonard nous a dit de faire, ce qui nous a permis de penser à comment changer des choses, était de ne jamais jouer la même partie la même façon deux fois», a raconté Rowen. «Alors, si tu joues un arrangement ABAB, tu auras deux versions différents. Il y aura un thème général qui sera en train de changer».

«On la fait avec toutes les chansons. On voulait s'assurer qu'il n'y avait pas de répétition et

que ça ne deviendrait pas monotone. Leonard nous a permis de penser à quoi d'autre on pouvait faire».

Ils sont entrés dans le studio avec environ 70% du matériel pour l'album écrit ou arrangé. Cela les a laissé d'espace pour expérimenter, ce que les a bien servi. Certains des morceaux les plus forts sur l'album sont les produits des idées de dernière minute.

«*Coal Not Dole*, est venue le jour avant qu'on l'a enregistrée. Elle est simple comme chanson, mais très puissante», a dit Rowen.

Cette chanson et quelques autres, y compris *Alan Macpherson of Mossspark*, ont été suggérées par Podolak. Caleb a dit que Podolak s'est servi comme le quatrième membre du groupe pendant le projet.

«Il n'a pas outrepassé ses pouvoirs, mais il voulait qu'on essaie chaque idée sur la table. On était très ouvert. C'était la repartie la plus confortable qu'on n'a jamais eu dans l'industrie».

Jesse a aussi dit qu'ils ont été servi par une autre paire d'oreilles expérimentées dans le studio. Leur ingénieur, Mark Basic, pouvait entendre chaque note croche sur le premier écoute de son côté de la table.

«Il avait toujours une attitude encourageante. Ils nous a toujours dit qu'il pensait qu'on pouvait mieux faire».

L'aide est venu d'autres sources aussi.

Trois membres de The Duhks ont joué sur l'album. Puis, des membres de Les poules à Colin, un des meilleurs groupes alt-trad de Montréal, ont des apparences.

Et un autre membre de la famille a sa main dans le projet. Le travail de leur tante, Karen Gallant, une artiste reconnue de l'Île, a été utilisé par Lennie Gallant plusieurs fois. C'est elle qui a créé l'art de couverture pour *Auprès du poêle*.

Les réponses initiales au projet ont été très favorables, ce qui va forcément être traduit en encore plus de temps sur la route, où les réponses ont déjà été incroyablement favorables.

Brian O'Donovan, en écrivant à propos des Burren Backroom Sessions qui ont pris place cette année à Boston, l'a décrit comme tel:

«Ils sont probablement un des groupes les plus emballants et progressives à venir à Boston en mémoire récent. Le futur de ces garçons est immense. La musique traditionnelle - les racines et les branches - sur les deux côtés de l'Atlantique est tenu entre des mains capables».

En 2014, le Kansas City Star les a inclus sur leur liste des meilleurs actes traditionnels à l'Alliance Folk de cette année.

Leur album a déjà atteint les top 20 sur la charta Billboard de la musique mondiale.

Ce n'est pas mal pour un groupe de gars qui n'ont toujours pas leurs 25 ans.

9Bach

Anian (Real World Records)



Anian est le troisième album de 9Bach et sert comme preuve que ce groupe qui chante en gallois n'a pas du tout perdu leur

pouvoir. Le travail instrumental et la voix captivante de Lisa Jen, ainsi que les incroyables morceaux de Martin Hoyland - sur lesquelles on trouve des rythmes de club, de la musique électro et de basse retentissante - ne cesse pas de ravir. Ali Byworth (les percussions), Dan Swain (la basse), Esiyll Glyn Jones (la harpe, la voix) et Mirain Roberts (la voix) - ajoute tous considérablement à la tapisserie complexe de leur son. Il serait paresseux de décrire 9Bach comme le Portishead du Pays de Galles, pourtant pour quelqu'un qui ne leur connaît pas, il n'est pas mal comme signalement de leur oeuvre musical. On trouve des grooves de trip-hop, des harmonisations vocales oniriques superposées et de la musique électronique fusionnée avec de la guitare, de la harpe et

du piano. Véritablement, voilà un mélange entre un passé mythique et un présent immédiate qui crée un son de dub druidique. *Anian* devrait plaire aux lecteurs de *Penguin Eggs* tout comme les lecteurs de *Mojo*.

– Par Tim Readman

– Traduit par Michelle Hahn-Baker

Maivish

Sunlight into Blue (Independent)



Parmi les morceaux de leur premier enregistrement *Sunlight into Blue*, Maivish (qui veut dire grive musicienne en anglais familière),

on trouve des arrangements de chansons traditionnelles et des chansons originales écrits par les membres du groupe: Adam Broome, Jaige Trudel et Matthew Orwell, ainsi que Nils Fredland et Yann Falquet qui ont aussi contribué. Broome, qui a grandi dans les Cotswolds d'Angleterre, interprète la technique de la guitare traditionnelle depuis qu'il est devenu un musicien professionnel en 1976. Trudel, qui joue du violon,

a grandi dans un endroit rural de Vermont dans une famille musicale. Il est enseignant diplômé de la technique Alexander. Orwell a grandi dans une famille de fabricants d'instruments et a joué pendant neuf ans avec le Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble du Maryland.

Leurs talents s'unissent harmonieusement sur *Sunlight into Blue*, qui varie entre les airs traditionnels du violon et les chansons inspirées par la tradition. L'album commence avec *Cuckoo's Nest*, qui fait partie du répertoire du Morris danse de Bledington, Gloucestershire, suivi de *Lonesome Woods*, une chanson traditionnelle anglaise à propos de l'amour non réciproque. On trouve aussi les airs *The Rambling Comber*, *Four Loom Weaver*, *What Will We Do*, *Sunlight into Blue* et *Lilies/Embers*. La majorité des morceaux sont présentés de style traditionnel avec un coup de trombone surprenant sur quelques-uns. L'album est très plaisant et entièrement constant du début à la fin.

– By Gene Wilburn

– Traduit par Michelle Hahn-Baker

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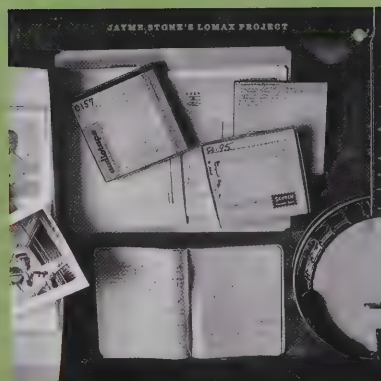
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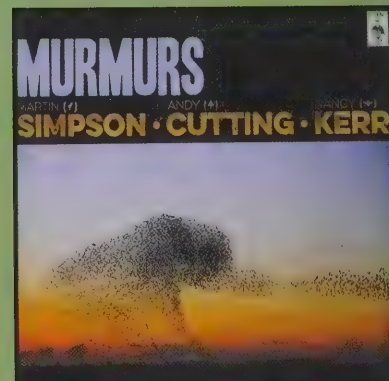
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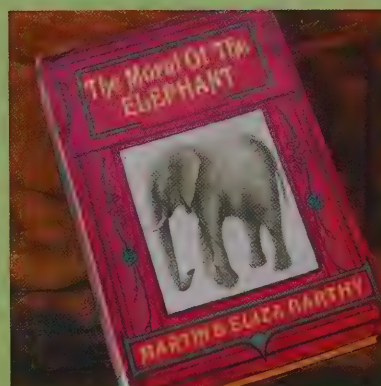
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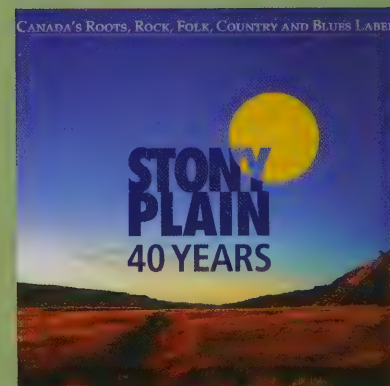
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À la rencontre de Doolin'

Trois Doolins sont présentés dans cet article.

Le premier Doolin est une petite colonie sur la côte exposée de County Clare en Irlande. On y trouve trois bars renommés pour leurs sessions de musique traditionnelle irlandaise.

Le deuxième Doolin' - avec l'apostrophe - est un groupe français de six membres inspiré par la musique de Doolin et d'autres endroits similaires.

Le troisième *Doolin'* est le très bon nouvel album du groupe, sur lequel on y trouve une image des musiciens dans un bar irlandais, possiblement à Doolin'.

Doolin' n'a pourtant pas été produit à Doolin, mais loin de là à Nashville, où la joueuse de banjo Alison Brown et son mari Gary West habitent. Les fondateurs de Compass Records ont partagé la scène avec Doolin' en France et ont été impressionnés par l'approche innovante du groupe.

«Ils nous ont proposé de venir enregistrer chez eux», dit Jacob Fournel, qui joue de la flûte et des sifflets. «Ils sont de bons amis de John Doyle (le célèbre guitariste irlandais) et l'ont demandé de servir comme notre producteur artistique. On l'a envoyé les démos et il nous a rendu ses idées pour les arrangements, les harmonies et les accords, qui étaient quelque peu différentes des nôtres. On les a retravaillés à Nashville».

Doyle a aussi contribué comme un musicien. «Il joue de la guitare électrique dans *Famine*, l'adaptation d'une chanson de Sinéad O'Connor, qu'on traite de façon moderne. Il joue le thème et contribue de la guitare de styles funk et jazz». La majorité des airs sont traditionnels ou écrits de manière similaire et joués précisément dans un style irlandais-contemporain.

Fondé à Toulouse en 2005, Doolin' a rapidement fait les connaissances des meilleurs joueurs traditionnels irlandais. Jacob et son frère, Josselin Fournel [le bodhrán], ont voyagé en Irlande pour apprendre des experts tels que Carmel Gunning, Sean Ryan, Colm O'Donnell et Brid O'Donoghue.

«On a essayé de trouver les meilleurs musiciens et de collaborer avec eux. On a commencé avec Desi Wilkinson, joueur de flûte, avec qui on a joué ici en France. Moi, Josselin et Guilhem Cavaillé, notre joueur de violon, avons été très attirés vers la partie instrumentale de la musique irlandaise. Les autres membres, Nicolas Besse [la guitare], Wilfried Besse [la voix et l'accordéon] et Sébastien Saunié [la basse] — ont trouvé la musique irlandaise à travers les chansons de The Pogues, The Dubliners, même U2. Ces deux côtés cohabitent dans notre musique».

Un fil noir unifie *Doolin'* : la famine irlandaise des années 1840 et l'émigration en masse qu'elle a provoquée, dispersant les gens irlandais et leur musique à travers le monde. Les chansons viennent d'un éventail de genres. «On a voulu marquer les conséquences de la famine, tel que l'effet massif qu'elle a eu sur la musique américaine et comment cette musique est retournée en Europe avec la musique pop et country».

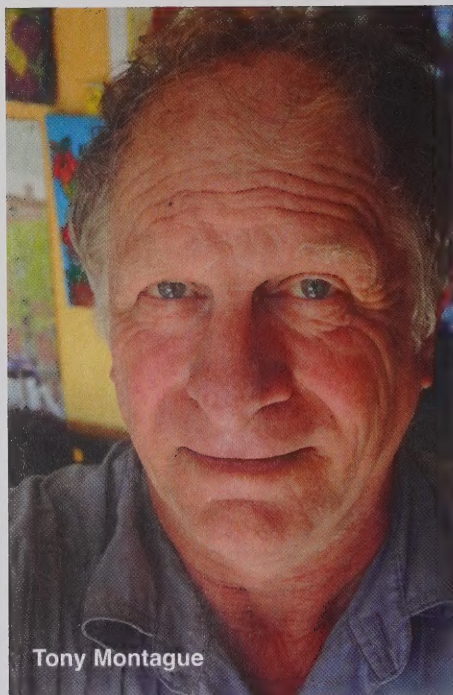
On trouve des reprises telles que *Famine* de O'Connor, *The Galway Girl* de Steve Earle et *The Ballad of Hollis Brown* de Bob Dylan, parmi de nouveaux morceaux composés par le groupe. Nicolas a aussi adapté un poème de la mère d'Oscar Wilde et l'a mis en musique.

Amsterdam, une chanson fulminante du chansonnier belge Jacques Brel, est l'inclusion la plus surprenant. Garry West a voulu l'inclure. «Compass voulait une chanson qui renforcerait notre identité francophone et Amsterdam a mieux fusionné avec notre thème d'un port servant comme un point de transition pour les migrants. Elle est une chanson bien aimée de notre groupe et John a écrit un thème instrumental».

En février, Doolin' va voyager à travers l'Atlantique pour la première fois. «L'album est notre premier à être distribué en Amérique du Nord», dit Jacob. «On a eu l'incroyable expérience d'enregistrer dans un studio fantastique à Nashville avec John Doyle. Cela nous a donné une nouvelle inspiration comme un groupe».

— Par Tony Montague





Tony Montague

Music journalist Tony Montague urges the Canadian folk community to expand its cultural reach to include more non-Anglo-Celtic traditions.

“An inward-looking Anglo-American monocultural ghetto oblivious to the makeup of the present day’s actual population.” That’s how my friend and colleague Andy Cronshaw described the “British — most specifically English” — folk scene in July’s issue of *fRoots*, the U.K.’s leading folk, roots, and world music magazine.

Given a choice of targets in the popular monthly interview 12 shots from the *fRoots* Rocket Launcher, he could, like many interviewees, have declined to fire in the name of non-violence or, like others, taken a pot shot at the obnoxiously obvious — Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Nigel Farage and their ilk, or the hatred they engender. But Andy made the most of the *fRoots* bazooka to create a stir. He knew the question in advance and calmly, provocatively, took aim at a large section of the readership.

It should be said that, as well as writing about music, Andy is a multi-instrumentalist and co-founder of the acoustic world music group Sans. But the quartet’s career is not what motivated his choice: it’s his long-held conviction that U.K. folk clubs need to reflect who Brits

are now culturally, at least as much as who they once were. And in the turbulent wake of Brexit, it’s crucial for the traditional end of the music spectrum there not to become associated with narrowing of heart and mind, or xenophobia.

But does Mr. Cronshaw’s bazooka blast have any resonance in North America, and, more to the point, in Canada? Metaphorically anointing myself first with maple syrup, I opine this may be the case. Well just a bit, but of course not nearly so much, really.

I don’t come with gun, machete, or scimitar — no more weapons, please — but do suggest that, as folk and roots music aficionados, it’s time to look once again at issues of inclusion and exclusion — from our personal choices in music, to the artists themselves, and what we consider to be Canadian traditions.

Surely whenever a folk club makes a point of having aboriginal performers on its calendar each season it helps in a small but significant way for us to reach across the gap that’s yawned so long between the First Nations people and ‘settler’ Canadians. The same goes for Métis, and Inuit, and all artists whose skin is not pale. Francophones fare better in the Anglo-Celtic world, as long as they perform dance music and songs of unrelenting bonhomie.

Music may be an international language but we need to use it consciously to engage with others we’re unable to talk to, for whatever reason. To be accessible to the music of new immigrants is a powerful way of making them feel welcome and respected. It may be the best way to begin cultural dialogue and build social bridges. And music leads to dancing, and...we know the rest.

No offence to the taste of those who listen almost exclusively to music from the Anglo-Celtic traditions — so unfathomably rich and diverse, and my own — but please let’s open up more to people who sing in other languages in Canada, and are clearly high-calibre musicians. Usually we only get to hear them at summer festivals.

The political dimension of this is important at a time that’s beginning, very uncomfortably, to echo the 1930s, with the rise of angry, unreasoning voices and the increasing resort to violence. It’s good to remind ourselves that the music of the people has long played a crucial role in raising spirits and gathering strength through the creation of a sense of community.

And there’s always so much to discover in any culture. I want to end positively with a re-

cent musical encounter with a band from Haiti, a country we may think of as very ‘other’, so much so that we shy away from it, though there’s a relatively large population of Haitians in Canada.

In the summer issue of *Penguin Eggs* another colleague, Lark Clark, wrote of meeting and hearing the nine-piece outfit Lakou Mizik, from Haiti. In April when I played the advance copy sent me of its debut album *Wa Di Yo* I had one of those sublime experiences we all look for in music — like hearing John Lee Hooker, Andy Palacio, or Nusrat Fatah Ali Khan for the first time. Laiko Mizik’s songs come straight from the heart and they hit me smack in the heart, too — bull’s-eye! — yet I knew very little of the culture and music of Haiti, or understood the lyrics in French-based Kreyol.

Later I interviewed band members and their manager, Zach Niles, for *fRoots*. The preparation involved learning something about Haiti, linking up the bits I’d read here and there. Wikipedia has a good site on the country’s history but don’t go there just before bedtime. Haitians have suffered, and continue to suffer, terribly. The strong, ebullient voices of Lakou Mizik — formed in the rubble of a devastating earthquake — take you to what it means for people to make music together to survive.

This is deep folk, old and new songs of resistance. But unlike in Western music, the jubilant sound is belied by the anguish and anger in many of the words. The English translation from Kreyol of the wonderfully uplifting *Anba Siklón* reveals a withering denunciation of Western companies, evangelicals, and even some aid agencies and the UN, who seek to exploit Haiti’s miseries: *Why are you laughing at my problems?/Contributing to my suffering?/Look how you steal my happiness/Have mercy! Have mercy!/Look how you walk over my culture/Why do you take advantage of my weakness?*

A nine-piece band may not fit many clubs, and Lakou Mizik is not based in Canada, but we benefit greatly from acts like it that don’t fit into the Anglo-Celtic mould and whose music is so inspiring. There’s a growing wealth of such groups and artists within this country to choose from. And that’s the big issue in matters of culture, musical and otherwise — our choice of whether we include or exclude, give ear or dismiss, however politely.



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